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THE GLOAMING
OF LIFE.

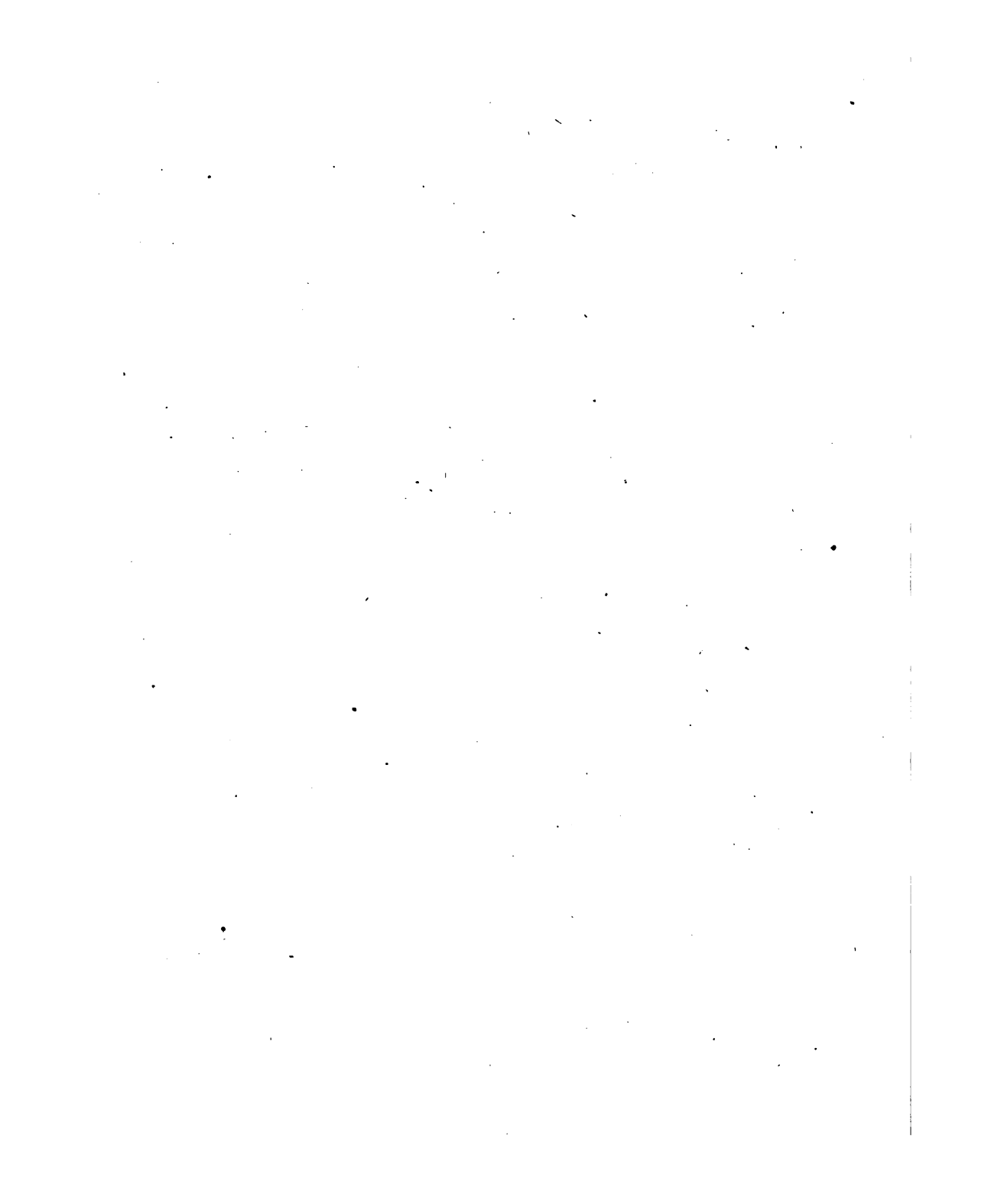


BY
REV. ALEXANDER WALLACE. D.D.



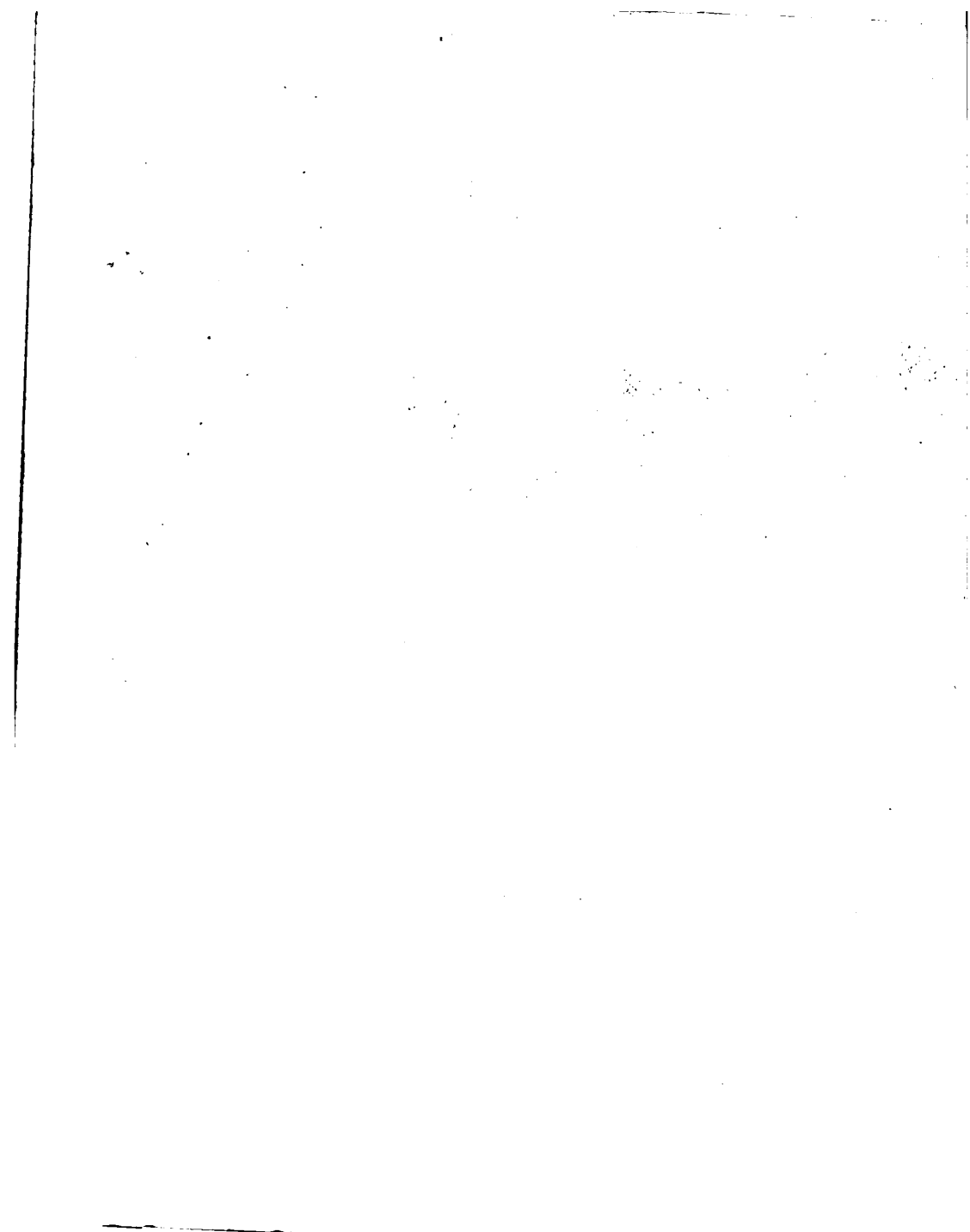
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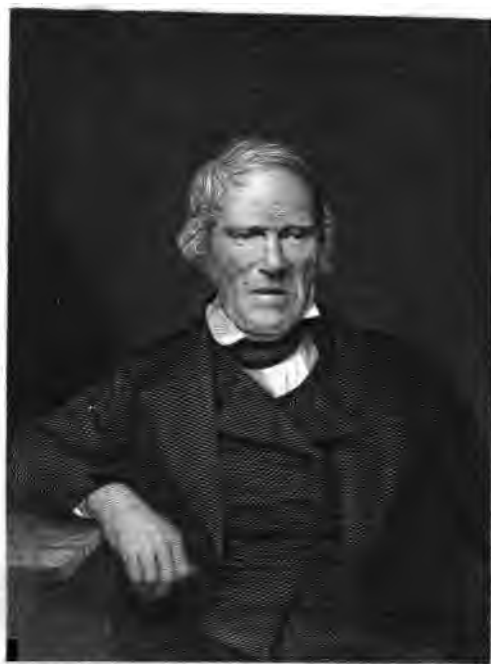




THE
GLOAMING OF LIFE.

"Alas! that I should have but the 'GLOAMING' of my life to devote
to my Maker, and to the helping on of a good cause."—Page 139.





yours Sincerely
James Stirling

THE
GLOAMING OF LIFE:
A MEMOIR OF
JAMES STIRLING.

BY

REV. ALEXANDER WALLACE, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE BIBLE AND WORKING PEOPLE;" "THE DESERT AND THE HOLY LAND;"
"SKETCHES OF LIFE AND CHARACTER," ETC. ETC.

ILLUSTRATED WITH ENGRAVINGS FROM DESIGNS BY

SIR J. NOEL PATON, GEORGE HAY, J. DENOVAN ADAM, HUGH CAMERON,
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P R E F A C E.

ON the 6th of March, 1874, one hundred years after the birth of James Stirling, an enthusiastic soiree was held in his native parish of Strathblane in celebration of this event. At that meeting it was proposed and carried with acclamation that an Illustrated Edition of his Memoir should be published. Few things could have been more pleasing to us, for it had been long one of our fondly cherished desires to see the biographical sketch of our old friend illustrated by some of our most distinguished artists. This has now been happily fulfilled, and our best thanks are hereby sincerely tendered to the generous friends who have so kindly furnished these illustrations, and who have really made them a labour of love. They have not only done much to enhance the value of this Centenary Edition, but, what is still more important, to advance the cause of Temperance throughout the country. It is our earnest prayer that with the additional attraction of pictorial illustration the *Gloaming of Life* may reach a higher class of readers, and do as much good there as it has already done in a humbler

sphere. The sale of upwards of twenty-six thousand copies of the former edition is a most gratifying fact, and inspires us with the hope that the seed thus sown cannot fail to bring forth, at least some precious fruit. God grant that it may! and to Him shall be all the praise.

GLASGOW, *December*, 1875.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

THE following pages, whilst containing a brief memoir of James Stirling, present at the same time some of the more striking and characteristic features of humble Scottish life. The particulars regarding Jean Drysdale, his mother, will, we trust, be read with much interest, as they afford a pleasing illustration of piety, thrift, and self-reliance. Her tact in making the most of very scanty means, her patient fortitude in overcoming difficulties, and her noble spirit of independence, are beyond all praise. These virtues stamped a marked character upon the lowly homes of Scotland in by-gone times,

“And made her lov’d at home, rever’d abroad.”

The life of her son is fraught with most important lessons to all, especially to the working-classes. It is a sad picture of the utter debasement and wretchedness which follow in the wake of

drinking habits, and of the ruin which these entail on business, body, and soul. But there is a brighter side of the picture. The last thirty years of James Stirling's life formed a most cheering instance of the blessed change which takes place when the prostrate will acquires new strength, and asserts its supremacy over the fierce cravings of appetite. The shattered frame, the enfeebled intellect, the debased moral nature, redeemed from the worst species of bondage, are brought under healing influences that usher in a new era of well-doing.

When Sterne describes slavery he selects but one poor captive, and makes him stand out from the rest, the dark embodiment of the sufferings and wrongs endured by thousands. We look at him through the grated door of his cell, where for "thirty years the western breeze had not fanned his blood; he had seen no sun, no moon in all that time, nor had the voice of friend or kinsman breathed through his lattice." When evil is thus individualized one feels more intensely its crushing wrongs. In this memoir prominence is given to one case only, but in its darkest features and in its brightest aspects it represents many others. The single case of James Stirling, whilst it gives terrible reality and vividness to evils long endured, is at the same time a "silver lining" to the dark cloud—a sad illustration of the evils of drinking, and a standing testimony to the good accomplished by the temperance movement. Freed from the worst bondage, he set himself vigorously to work for the freedom of others. The establishment of a library and a mechanics' institute in the village where he lived and laboured so long were greatly, if not mainly, owing to his

exertions. Temperance struck out an entirely new course for him, as it has done for thousands; and in every possible way, as far as his humble position and circumstances would admit, did he lay himself out for doing good.

This Memoir has been written with a view of extending his usefulness, especially amongst the class from which he sprung. His name is one which many will not willingly let die; and the teachings of the last thirty years of his life will, it is hoped, read their own important lessons, and exercise their own influence for good in the workshops and at the firesides of our working men.

We feel assured that many of our readers will look with special interest upon the accompanying steel engraving, which, we are happy to say, is a very striking likeness of the departed veteran. It will vividly recall to many throughout the land his graphic eloquence and his "old familiar face." "Though dead he yet speaketh," and it is our earnest prayer that, by means of this little book, he may long speak to many hearts, and do battle with the greatest curse of our land.

"The good abides. Man dies. Die too
The toil, the fever, and the fret;
But the great thought—the upward view—
The good work done—these fail not yet!
From sire to son, from age to age,
Goes down the growing heritage."

GLASGOW, *October*, 1857.

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THE TWO WAYS.



MEMOIR OF JAMES STIRLING.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD.



ABOUT the middle of the last century a young man of the name of Drysdale enlisted into the army, and on account of his excellent abilities and good behaviour, soon rose to the rank of sergeant-major. In one of the towns of Perthshire, where the regiment to which he belonged was quartered, he became acquainted with a young lady, who was not only well connected, as the phrase goes, but was heiress to a considerable property in her native county. Love and prudence, however, often part company, and this young lady, in evil hour, resolved to unite her destiny "for better or for worse" with that of the young soldier. This imprudent step offended her parents and all her relatives so much that they disowned her, and consigned the property to other hands. Any resolution

that "Davie Deans" ever made could not have been carried out with greater characteristic Scotch *dourness* than the resolve of this young lady's friends to disown her entirely, and "cut her off without a penny."

The young wife could bear up with courage and contentment notwithstanding the reverse in her social position which her marriage had made, so long as her husband was by her side. But a war broke out between this country and Spain, and Drysdale's regiment was amongst the first that was ordered to embark for the field of conflict. His wife would have accompanied him had she been permitted; but her first-born child was only a few months old, and she was obliged to remain behind. She saw her husband embark. They parted in deep sorrow, never to meet again in this world. The young sergeant fell in one of the engagements connected with that ill-fated expedition—probably in the attack upon Carthage, where about 20,000 of our brave soldiers fell, either in actual conflict with the enemy or by the still more dreadful ravages of disease. Slowly and sadly did young Mrs. Drysdale return from the scene of embarkation and go back to Culross, where her first and only child was born but a few months before. This child's name was Jean, and she deserves to occupy a prominent place in this narrative, for she afterwards became the mother of James Stirling, whose name has long been a household word among all the temperance reformers in Scotland.

It would have afforded us great pleasure had we been

able to state that the young widow and her infant charge had been invited by the "old folks" to their own home; but this was not the case. The fatal war with Spain made her and many others widows; and the dark cloud that overcast the sunshine of her early married life led her to seek light and comfort from the widow's God. She came to Stirling with her little girl, where she opened a small shop as the means of securing an honest through-bearing. The history of the young widow soon became known. Her superior intelligence, refinement, kindly disposition, and address, but above all, her meek, chastened sorrow, gained her many friends. One day as she stood at the door of her little shop with her daughter Jeanie, now an engaging "sweet lassie," by her side, looking with tearful eyes at a regiment of soldiers that was passing, to her surprise the officer in command stepped up to her and asked if she was Drysdale's widow. On hearing that she was, and that the bairn by her side was her only daughter, he went into the house and asked for a draught of water, which Jeanie brought him with the ease and grace of riper years. Before leaving he made arrangements that she should be sent to a school of a superior order, ranking at the time as a kind of boarding-school, where she acquired many useful accomplishments that were of great service to her in after years, and exerted a happy influence upon all the future members of her family, especially upon him who forms the subject of this memoir. She had a sweet voice, and could sing the most of our old Scotch airs with much taste and feeling.

The widow and her daughter were soon obliged to separate. The mother continued to keep her little shop in Stirling, but Jeanie, when she was but a short time in her "teens," was engaged as a domestic servant in the "big house" of a country laird in easy circumstances, whose grounds lay in the parishes of Campsie and Strathblane. There was in the service of this country laird at the same time a ploughman of the name of James Stirling. He belonged to Kilsyth, where his ancestors can be traced back for many generations. He tried first the brewing of beer on a small scale at Stirling, but did not succeed. The mash-tun was abandoned for the plough, and the malt-barn for the labours of the field. In those times there was little or no distance kept up between the farmer and his servants. The tie that bound them together had less of a commercial and more of a patriarchal character. It was then customary for the young women in the country to meet in the long winter evenings at one another's homes. They spun wool or knitted stockings around the blazing fire in the kitchen, and the young lads, who enjoyed the privilege of dropping in of their own accord, or were invited on such occasions, contributed by song or story-telling to the hilarity of the evening. Such a meeting was called a "*rocking*," a term derived from those primitive times when the country women employed their spare hours in spinning on a "rock" or distaff. Burns has referred to this mode of spending an evening in the olden times in one of his letters to his friend Lapraik—

"On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin',
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin';
And there was muckle fun and jokin',
Ye needna doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin'
At sang about."

These gatherings, as might be expected, had important results beyond the passing hour. In proof of this, the banns of marriage between the ploughman and the dairy-maid, Jean Drysdale, were by-and-by proclaimed in the parish church; and never did servants leave any "onstead" in broad Scotland and enter upon the married life with more hearty good wishes from their employers than they did.

James Stirling, the distinguished temperance reformer, was born in the parish of Strathblane, 6th March, 1774, and was named after his father. Affectionate interest, as well as curiosity, led us to examine the parish register of Strathblane, in which there is the following entry:—"James, lawful son of James Stirling and Jean Drysdale, in Edenkiln, was baptized on the 6th March, 1774." From this it appears that he was baptized on the same day that he was born. The sixth of March happened to be a Sabbath, and from a superstitious notion which seems to have prevailed at that time, children born on Sabbath were baptized on the same day, and this, in several parts of the country at least, was looked upon as a peculiarly fortunate event. Be this as it may, the little stranger born at Edenkiln had scarcely

composed himself to sleep after his first brisk washing in the fresh water from the Blane, and had scarcely felt himself at ease in this strange jumble of a world, when he was again tossed about, wrapped up, and hurried off in the loving arms of some old grannie, or young laughing queen of the village, to the parish kirk, where he was baptized in the midst of a rustic but deeply-interested assembly, by the Rev. Archibald Smith, whose name is still revered as that of a worthy and faithful minister.

The first time we visited the parish of Strathblane we made an effort to discover the house in which the subject of this memoir was born. We wended our way amongst the low-roofed thatched cottages of Edenkiln, the name given to the chief clachan in the parish. Our guide took us to a most wretched-looking hovel, and as we stood in front, gazing around us in the midst of a drenching rain, an unmistakable Irish face at once confronted us in the doorway.

"Come here, some of yez," said the little Irish woman, addressing one or more within in the broadest Milesian accent.

"Can't ye come here, some of yez?" she repeated with increased emphasis, looking all the time very suspicious as to what might be the object of our errand. Three or four heads were immediately thrust out at the doorway above hers; and certainly, had our object been any other than peaceful, we might well have quailed before such forbidding looks. Addressing what seemed to be the patriarch's head, which, so far as smoke, and dirt, and hair were concerned,

might have furnished a capital subject for the genius of Rembrandt, we made known the object of our visit. The face of the sheikh relaxed into a bland smile at once, as he said—

“Get out o’ the way, boys there, and let his honour in!” All the heads retreated and we advanced. It will be difficult in the Goosedubs of Glasgow or the Cowgate of Edinburgh to find such another dwelling. There was but one apartment. Formerly there may have been two. If so, the partition had been removed. Overhead were the bare, black, smoked joists, which may have been floored at one time, but all vestige of that is now gone; and above these were the rafters supporting the thatch, through which, at rents here and there, we could see the driving clouds, and through which the rain fell, making the mud floor below as soft as a clay field. The patriarch was highly delighted that a “*gintleman*” at any time had been born under his roof; and it would certainly “*taiche*” him to think more of his home. His wife, however, was inexorable. Such an honour seemed to have no influence in reconciling her to her dismal habitation. She had nothing but complaints against it. The roof wouldn’t keep out the rain, and the chimney wouldn’t keep in the smoke; and assuredly her face and everything about the dwelling bore testimony that the latter portion of her complaint was but too true, whilst the pattering of rain on the floor, falling from above, seemed to say that this house was little better than a “dripping cave.” Pat, however, was quite well pleased, and silenced the

objections of his better half for a time by repeating again and again, in defiance of all Dr. Southwood's sanitary regulations—

“Troth, an’ there’s never a one of us that’s had a sore head since we came here.”

Struck with the number of heads around us, and the large quantity of smoking porridge, to which the eager faces of the youngsters were directed, we inquired at Pat how many lived beneath this roof. “Why, there’s a standing party of eleven of us;” and then pausing for a moment and bethinking himself, and repeating this name and the other, he admitted that fourteen souls would sleep in his house that night. It is true that the one half of this world does not know how the other half lives. Pat’s polite attention, and his off-handed sallies of wit, that welled up from a merry heart in the midst of his dirt and poverty, were worthy of the “Emerald Isle.” After thanking him for his courtesy, and when we were picking our steps through the smoke and the mud to the door, he stepped forward in true Hibernian style, and with a grace that would have done honour to any drawing-room he said—

“It’s still a pour o’ rain, and if yer honour doesn’t know where to get a bed, troth it’s mysel’ that would be too glad to make ye welcome to one!”

We left under the impression that this cottage was the one in which James Stirling was born, but next morning we learned that this was not the case. We therefore started again from Milngavie, and at last succeeded in the object of

our search. To all who are anxious to know the birth-place of our temperance reformer, and who may visit the retired clachan of Edenkiln, we may state that the house in which he was born is a low-roofed thatched cottage, consisting of a "but and a ben," and a trap stair leading to a small apartment above, and is the next house on the west side of the present post-office. As we stood beneath the roof of that clay "biggin'," and thought of the many incidents of joy and sorrow that had transpired within the small compass of that "but and ben," and those who had been reared on that clay floor, we could not but repeat the words—

"An' mony buirdly lads and hizzies
Are bred in sic a way as this is."

But even granting that this is the case, it is no excuse for the over-crowded, dilapidated, and wretched condition of not a few cottages on that green knoll on the southern bank of the Blane. The population greatly exceeds the number of houses, and it is surely questionable policy on the part of proprietors either to refuse altogether, or to show reluctance to feu ground for building on, from the fear of increasing the number of paupers. There is blame somewhere, or Edenkiln would not be what it is. Some of the cottages, and the condition of their inmates, are a blot upon the fair face of that lovely valley, which, for all the varied features that make up the picturesque and the beautiful, is not surpassed by any other parish of the same extent in Scotland.

We have had the first journey of the little stranger to the

kirk on the day of his birth and baptism. The second was about three weeks after this, when the mother and the child set out for Stirling in what seems to us now rather a novel fashion. At that time salt was hawked through the country by men who were called "salt cadgers." It was carried in bags, or creels, slung over the back of a donkey or a horse. The "cadger" who visited Strathblane in his regular rounds came from Stirling, and one day he brought the sad intelligence that Widow Drysdale, who still lived there, had been taken suddenly ill, and seemed to be at the point of death. There was then no post, and no regular means of communication in that district. Letters for Milngavie were sent out from the General Post-office in Glasgow to the toll at Cowcaddens, and forwarded as an opportunity was supplied by a printfield or a farmer's cart. Mrs. Stirling resolved that she would go and see her mother; and as the cadger was on his way home when he called with intelligence of her mother's illness, she placed her baby in one of his empty panniers or sacks, and travelling in this way she reached the bedside of her dying mother, who had seen many trials, and who was drawing near the last.

When Robert Nicol, the young poet, of whom Scotland may feel justly proud, lay very ill in Leeds, his mother, the wife of a poor cottar, went to nurse him, and on being asked how she came to get the money to take her all that way, her noble reply was, "*I shore for the siller.*" She hired herself out in harvest as a reaper, and having earned as much money as would take her to Leeds, she set

off to see her highly gifted son. And there was much of this same spirit of independence about Jean Drysdale. She arrived in time to hear her mother bear testimony to the care and faithfulness of the widow's God; and though she had been hardly dealt with on the part of those who were never reconciled to her, no murmur escaped her lips. She trusted in that Saviour who, when upon the cross, commended his widowed mother to the care and protection of the beloved disciple. Her latter end was peace. She spoke of all the way in which a covenant-keeping God had led her, of the lights and shadows of her checkered life, and invoked all covenant blessings upon the head of her daughter and the babe in her arms. Her hard lot is another instance of how one false step will blast the fairest prospects for life.

The poor cannot spend much time in formal sorrow; and when Jean saw her mother decently interred, she hastened back with her baby in her arms to her young charge at Edenkilm, with many sad musings, but not sorrowing as those who have no hope.

The next residence of the Stirling family was at Kirkland—the name applied to two or three cottages and a few adjoining fields on the southern side of the Blane water, and a little to the west of the bluff, bald, and barren peak of Dunglas, which stands sentinel at the eastern entrance of the lovely valley of the Blane. Crossing this stream from the Broadgate Farm, and ascending a gentle slope, a little to the south of the cottages at Kirkland, we were shown the spot on which, but a few years ago, the dwelling of the

Stirling family stood. There is not now a vestige remaining of that cottage home. The old fireside around which clustered so many happy faces, and which was the abode of affection, industry, piety, and peace—where the scenes described in the “Cottar’s Saturday Night” were seen in actual life—is now a portion of a large green field. Jean Drysdale was the mother of fifteen children, and the most of them grew up by her side on that green knoll, where the buttercup and daisy, the white clover and the forget-me-not, now bloom.

“The same fond mother bent at night
O’er each fair sleeping brow;
She had each folded flower in sight—
Where are those dreamers now?”

As we stood upon the slope of that field, once occupied by a happy cottage home, and recalled the scenes witnessed there seventy years ago, we saw the mother busy at her wheel (for few in the country could match Jean Drysdale at this), and the youngsters at their play, and the elder bairns at some thrifty employment or another; and as the gloaming hour approached, we saw the father wending his way homewards over the fields, and the scene so happily described by the poet rose up before us.

“At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th’ expectant wee things, toddlin’, stacher through
To meet their dad, wi’ flichterin’ noise and glee.

His wee bit ingle blinking bonnily,
His clean hearthstane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lispin' infant prattlin' on his knee,
Does a' his weary carkin' care beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labour and his toil."

The occupation of young Stirling's father became more miscellaneous during his married life. He was a country jobber, and could turn his hand to almost every kind of rural labour; one day thatching houses, cutting hay, breaking stones, keeping the roads in repair, and another engaged at such work as has been described by honest Luath to his friend Cæsar:—

"A cottar howkin' in a sheugh,
Wi' dirty stanes biggin' a dyke,
Barring a quarry, and sic like."

We might go over in detail every varied phase of humble cottage life so admirably drawn in the "Cottar's Saturday Night," and we would find that the counterpart of every one of these had been identified with the everyday life of the family at Kirkland. That cottage home was frequently darkened with sorrow, for several of the children died young. Six daughters grew up, went out to service, got married, lived to be grandmothers, and were highly esteemed for their intelligence and worth. They bore throughout life the happy impress of that good training which they received from an excellent mother, thus furnishing another instance of the power which every mother wields over the minds of her children either for good or for evil. It deserves to be

mentioned that one of the daughters served in the family of Craigbarnet for eighteen years—a fact alike creditable both to the one and the other. The only surviving member of this family of fifteen is the wife of a respectable farmer in Western Canada.

But stop! yonder is young Stirling going to school. He is now five years of age. His books are not heavy to carry, for at the very most they never amounted to more than the Shorter Catechism, the Proverbs, the Bible, and, perhaps, a copy-book, for it is doubtful if ever he got the length of "*Barry's Collection*," if it was used at that time in our parish schools. There he is, with shining face, a stout, little, thick-set, dumpy, barefooted boy, pattering along the side of the Blane, and stopping occasionally to cut, from the "bourtree" on the way, a fitting sapling for a "tow-gun." One of his schoolmates, still living in Strathblane, informed us that the parish school at that time was an old barn (a new school being in course of erection), and that daylight was admitted by two small "boles" or apertures in the wall, or by the open doors at both ends of the barn. How the old man's face brightened up with the gladsome memories of schoolboy days, as he spoke of that wondrous "barn-schule" at the Netherton, and how he and all the rest tore the "*verra claes*" aff their backs sliding doon the "sawnie brae" on the burn side! But the whole joy of childhood and youth seemed to come back upon him as he spoke of the dark corners in that "schule" where they could "fecht" and not be seen, and carry on their pranks without detection, espec-

ally when the doors were "*tied*," and every one was in the secret but the bewildered teacher himself, who kept laying about him in the dark upon all and sundry, so that the innocent suffered with the guilty. The new school was got ready, and matters improved. Stirling attended the barn and the new school till he could "read the Bible, and write the word '*commandment*' in a very rough way." The regular school curriculum then was, first, the Shorter Catechism. The first page, containing the A B C, was cut out and pasted on a board, and carried to school not unfrequently dangling from the neck of the urchin. This was the first step to the temple of knowledge. Then came those wondrous stepping-stones, the *abs*, *eb*s, *ib*s, and so forth; and when these were mastered, all at once the perplexed aspirant was ushered into the "Chief end of man." But the first page or two was easy work, for by dint of parrot rote from hearing others saying it at the fireside, he had generally picked up as much as this, although he could not read a single word. Then came the "Proverbs" of Solomon, and when these were mastered, the New Testament; and when the Bible, "the whole Bible," was reached, and every difficult word in Nehemiah, either in the way of spelling or pronunciation, was mastered, the curriculum of learning at our parish schools, to very many scholars, was considered complete. Of course this did not include all that was taught; far from it, but very many were not permitted to go much further than this. And yet, what a blessing these schools have been to Scotland! We owe to them what is

perhaps not to be found in any other country so much as in our own, an intelligent peasantry and a distinct peasant-class literature. We quite agree with Macaulay when he says, referring to the establishment of our parish schools:—

“Before one generation had passed away it began to be very evident that the common people of Scotland were superior in intelligence to the common people of any other country in Europe. To whatever land the Scotchman might wander, to whatever calling he might betake himself, in America or in India, in trade or in war, the advantage which he derived from his early training raised him above his competitors. If he was taken into a warehouse as a porter he soon became foreman, if he enlisted in the army he soon became a sergeant. Scotland, meanwhile, in spite of all the barrenness of her soil and the severity of her climate, made such progress in agriculture, manufactures, in commerce, in letters, in science, in all that constitutes civilization, as the old world had never seen equalled, and as even the new world had scarcely seen surpassed. This wonderful change is to be attributed, not, indeed, solely, but principally to the national system of education.”

Young Stirling only enjoyed the benefit of the parish school for two years, and even this short period was considerably broken. He had two teachers during that time. The former of these was a divinity student, who was compelled, for the sake of a living, as many had been before him, and as many have been since, to wield the “ferula” and “teach the young idea how to shoot” during the summer

vacations at college, or the months when attendance was not required at the divinity hall. In this way many a student has manfully struggled upwards to the pulpit. It was thus that the lamented Michael Bruce eked out at the best a poor pittance. But the struggles of his brief career, and the halo of poetical genius which he has thrown around these, have won for him an inner place in the memory of all those who revere humble worth, or who can appreciate such sweet lyrics as he has left behind.

Mr. Stirling says in his brief autobiography—

“My first teacher, the divinity student, was a mild young man, who soon left for the ministry, and for a number of years was absent in America, but came home and was inducted pastor of a church in the suburbs of Glasgow, from which he was deposed for drunkenness, as was also his successor.”

This was a sad termination to the ministerial usefulness of this “mild young man.” The light of many, alas! in the same walk of life, has been quenched in darkness ere noon from the same cause. The above extract is very brief, but what a world of misery is contained in it! Blighted hopes, usefulness destroyed, talents wasted, learning, toil, manhood laid prostrate, and nothing left but a dark aching void.

The next teacher at Strathblane was a “stern man.” Flogging, in his estimation, was just about as necessary to make any boy a good reader, speller, or arithmetician, as the letters themselves were to make words. His very look

was "awfu'." It was a thunder-cloud, and anything that did lighten it up was the lightning flash of anger, when the ruler, the rod, or the "tawse" came down like a thunderbolt upon some poor culprit. On the whole of Sabbath he seemed to be "nursing his wrath, to keep it warm" till Monday morning, and then woe to the child that could not say the weekly psalm. But say or not say, this stern disciplinarian used the rod on the principle that if it was not absolutely required to-day it would be to-morrow, and the school, therefore, more especially on Monday mornings, became like a pen of bleating sheep.

"Full well the boding tremblers learn'd to trace
The day's disasters in his morning's face."

The face of Goldsmith's teacher seems to have been lighted up occasionally with glimpses of sunshine, but this dominie of Strathblane had the same forbidding face morning, noon, and night. It takes a great deal, however, to break down the elastic spirit of childhood, and when that school door at Netherton burst open in the summer sunny Saturdays, or in the winter when all the lochs were frozen, and all the road home was a long slide, what a helter-skelter roaring flood of delight came rushing forth, even although the teacher had a face as grim and unmoved as the frowning peak of Dunglas itself.

The school at Strathblane, like many other parish schools in Scotland at the time, still retained the barbarous practice of cock-fighting at "Fasten-e'en" or Shrove Tuesday.

"Every boy who could," says Stirling, "was commanded to bring a fighting cock to school, when all who did so drew tickets No. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c. &c., from the master, for which they paid 2d. Nos. 1 and 2, 3 and 4 were pitted together, however unequally matched. The cocks that would not fight were the master's portion, and also those who died in battle. He had a number of bottles of cold punch prepared for the occasion, so that there is no wonder though some of us became dram-drinking and pugnacious chaps."

This account of a practice so barbarous and revolting took us at first so much by surprise, that we felt it necessary to make inquiries at some old folks, and to draw upon their recollections of early days. One said that in his young days, and at his parish school, it was customary for the boys to bring their fighting cocks on Shrove Tuesday in clean white pillow-cases, which were made ready and furnished with no small degree of pride by their mothers. Another had a very vivid recollection of a gallant bird that was named "Blucher," in honour of the distinguished Prussian general of that name, so that the practice had been continued for several years, even during the present century. "Blucher" had beat all the cocks in the parish, and the boy who owned him had therefore been for year after year the "king of the school," for such was the title of the boy who happened to have the winning bird. Nor was it a mere empty name, for in many cases he exercised a sway which was far from being agreeable to the teacher. "Blucher" had long been

the cock of the parish, "the hero of a hundred fights." In one of those he had lost an eye. The annual Saturnalia came round once more, and he was brought forward. His opponent on this occasion was from a neighbouring parish, and was equipped with steel spurs. "Blucher" was not proof against these, as the boys vainly supposed he would be, and he fell, leaving the floor of the school covered with great clots of blood. The birds that would not fight were called "fuggies," and fell to the master's share. These poor birds were not unfrequently fastened to a stake driven into the play-ground, and were destroyed, one after one, in the brutal game of "cock-throwing," the charge being a half-penny a throw. The master got the halfpennies and the dead birds, and was thus provided with "*cock-a-leekie*" for weeks together. But how an intelligent, humane man could "say grace" over food provided in such a barbarous manner may well be matter of surprise.

It is indeed surprising that such a practice, so revolting to every finer feeling, and calculated to produce the very worst effect upon the boys, who, for weeks after the day's fighting had taken place, would gloat over the brutal exhibition, and delight in rehearsing the heroic deeds of this and the other gallant bird, which continued to fight even after both eyes were struck out, and which in the moment of victory dropped dead on the floor,—it is surprising that such a practice should have been patronized by the parents themselves, and by teachers, to whom it formed in some parishes a considerable portion of their income.

Young Stirling's teacher furnished the children with "cold punch" at the close of the fight, as an appropriate finish to the disgraceful proceedings of the day. What an example to the young! We are apt to feel indignant at such conduct; but after all, so far as the drinking part of it is concerned, the conduct of any parent at this moment is not less reprehensible who presses the sparkling glass to the rosy lips of his children around his table, and coaxes them to drink. The fascinations of drinking were thrown around the holiday amusements of school. And what amusements and what associations connected with them! Cock-fighting and cold punch! Verily there was little wonder, as Stirling says, that "some of us became dram-drinking and pugna-cious chaps."

What became of the "stern master" of Strathblane we have not been able to learn. His "reign of terror," however, came to an end, not much to the regret of any of the juveniles in the parish. He was succeeded by a man of a very different stamp—a kind of Sir John Falstaff in his way, so far as the limited platform of a parish dominie would admit of this. His motto was—"Take things easy." This was his advice on all occasions of difficulty, and "Ease" seemed at all times to be his chief counsellor. Those were happy days for the urchins of Strathblane, at least for all who were troubled with bad memories or dull heads; for in all the routine of school business the teacher carried out his favourite maxim. He was often seen "taking it easy" in the school, by enjoying a profound sleep at his

desk, after a night's carousal; and at that time any passer-by might have seen the boys playing at "leap-frog" over the forms, or pinning all sorts of things to the rusty black coat of the degraded teacher. When he was out drinking at night he would sometimes lose his way home, and stumble into a farm-house, to the no small annoyance of the family.

He was long an object of forbearance; but complaints became so numerous and so clamant that the kirk-session were obliged to interfere. When he perceived that they would no longer act upon his motto of taking matters easy, he proposed that if they would give him a certificate of character, which might be of advantage to him in another place where his drinking habits were not known, he would leave Strathblane and trouble them no more. With such a prospect, an *excellent character* was drawn up and placed in his hands; and with this document in his possession he was now more determined than ever to "take matters easy." He still retained his place, and when complaints poured in thick and fast from all quarters of the parish, and when his resignation was demanded by the kirk-session and the heritors, he never failed to produce the "excellent character" given him by the former, while, with a look of well-affected surprise, he assured them that they had no reason to complain when the *excellence of his character* was attested by the highest authority in the parish. He sunk, however, so low, that the workers at the print-field gave him a ducking in the pond, and subjected him to a rougher

ordeal than that which Sir John had to bear from the "Merry Wives of Windsor." That "excellent character" cost the kirk-session somewhere about £20 per annum. They were fairly outwitted; for when the case came before the Presbytery, he was there also with his "*gran' testimonial*," as he called it. It was arranged that he should receive £20 as a yearly pension, and with the assurance of receiving this sum for life he agreed to resign his living at Strathblane. This "excellent character," which he managed so adroitly to filch from the kirk-session, was the achievement of his life—the great victory over which the dominie, when in his cups, used to chuckle. But he did not live to enjoy it long. He removed to a parish at no great distance; his drinking habits became worse and worse; and he ended his miserable career in a ditch, into which he fell one dark night when staggering home from his usual "howf" in the public-house, and was found dead next morning.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY TOIL.

 YOUNG STIRLING was taken from school when he was seven years old, and as he formed one of a very numerous family he was obliged at this early age, by dint of his own labours, to contribute something to the earnings of the household. In describing the cottar's family, Burns says—

“Belyve, the elder bairns come drappin’ in,
At service oot amang the farmers roon’:
Some ca’ the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neebor toon.”

Herding was the occupation selected for Jamie, and of this it may be said, that perhaps more eminent names have been associated with this employment than with any other. There rise up before us the names of Dr. Alexander Murray, the distinguished linguist, Ferguson the astronomer, the Ettrick Shepherd, Michael Bruce, the Bethunes, Milne, the celebrated Chinese Missionary, Robert Nicoll, and a host of others, living and dead. “Wee Jamie,” as he was called, was hired out to herd to the people who kept the public-house known as the “Kirk House,” and his “penny fee” must have been very small. The boy who in after years was



HERD-BOY LIFE.

destined to expose the evils of intemperance with an eloquence and a graphic power all his own, began his struggles for a living in connection with a public-house. He was thus thrown, at a very early age, into the midst of scenes which came up in after life as vivid illustrations of those evils which he so strikingly depicted. The house to which he went as a herd-boy, and which was then and for many years afterwards, a tavern, is still standing, and is rather a smart-looking whitewashed cottage of one story, at the side of the gate leading to the parish church at Strathblane. There is a stone above the door that bears the date of 1745. The sign-board, however, has long since disappeared, and, so far at least as the purposes of a tavern are concerned, it may now be said of that cottage—

“Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where graybeard mirth and smiling toil retired;
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.”

At the time young Stirling went to this house as a herd-boy, the landlord rented a few fields in the neighbourhood, and kept some cows and sheep, which were committed to the boy's care. There are strange contrasts in human nature; and so here, by the very side of the churchyard, did the rustics of a former generation meet over the foaming tankard, and join in all the boisterous mirth of the tavern over the graves in which their forefathers slept.

The sturdy smith would leave his forge at almost every horse-shoeing, and turn up to the “Kirk House” with some

neighbouring farmer, to quench "that spark" for which Vulcan has ever been so famous. And farmers, in their "riding graith" from the market, would halt here and tie up their horses at the door or turn them into the kirkyard, and go in and get a "nipper." Ploughing matches and curling "bonspiels" were famous times for the "Kirk House." And servant lads, at feeing times or merry-makings, and when they met on Sabbath at the kirk, would turn in here too and treat their sweethearts to a dram. Notwithstanding the nearness of the public-house to the churchyard, it seems to have been well frequented; and in those days when there was no Forbes M'Kenzie's Act, it would likely have a pretty large share of customers on Sabbaths, especially on sacramental occasions, when tent-preaching was common, and when it was customary for people to travel a considerable distance to attend communions. Amongst those who frequented this little inn there were three noted parishioners, who were scarcely ever long absent. If one of them was at the public-house the other two were sure to be there also, or not far from it. One of these Stirling characterizes as a "squire," the second as an "old retired packman," who had made some money as a travelling merchant in England, and the third as "an old man who killed a sheep at such times as best suited the heritors and minister."

Some of the most respectable heritors in the parish, with excellent houses of their own, would occasionally frequent the "Kirk House" for a day's unrestrained freedom in drink-

ing—preferring the bare clay floor and the fireside of this low-roofed cottage to their comfortably furnished apartments at home. On all such occasions the three noted tipplers already referred to were always sure to be present. The uproar in those days was such that the herd-boy often wondered if the dead in the neighbouring graveyard would not hear it. Such scenes were not by any means confined to the Kirk House, nor to the parish of Strathblane. The aristocracy at that time were fond of a day occasionally in some country public-house, as well as poor parishioners or the middling class of heritors. The following scene, described by the late Lord Cockburn in his *Memorials*, happened about the same time in a small public-house in the south of Scotland, and is similar to the scene which young Stirling often witnessed at the “Kirk House.” The company in the one case was certainly much more aristocratic than in the other, but the uproar in both cases was much the same:—

“People sometimes say that there is no probability in Scott’s making the party in *Waverley* retire from the castle to the howf; but these people were not with me at the inn at Middleton, about forty years ago. The Duke of Buccleuch was living at Dalkeith; Henry Dundas at Melville; Robert Dundas, the Lord Advocate, at Arniston; Hepburn of Clerkington, at Middleton; and several of the rest of the aristocracy of Mid-Lothian within a few miles; all with their families and luxurious houses; yet had they, to the number of twelve or sixteen, congregated in this wretched ale-house for a day

of freedom and jollity. We found them roaring, and singing, and laughing in a low-roofed room, scarcely large enough to hold them, with wooden chairs, and a sanded floor. When their own lacqueys, who were carrying on high life in the kitchen, did not choose to attend, the masters were served by two women. There was plenty of wine, particularly claret, in rapid circulation on the table; but my eye was chiefly attracted by a huge bowl of hot whisky punch, the steam of which was almost dropping from the roof, while the odour was enough to perfume the whole parish. We were called in and made to partake, and were kindly used, particularly by my uncle Harry Dundas. How they did joke and laugh! with songs, and toasts, and disputation, and no want of practical fun. I don't remember anything they said, and probably did not understand it. But the noise, and the heat and the uproarious mirth—I think I hear and feel them yet. My father was in the chair, and he having gone out for a little, one of us boys was voted into his place, and the boy's health was drunk, with all the honours, as the 'Young Convener! Hurra, hurra! May he be a better man than his father! Hurra, hurra!' I need not mention that they were all in a state of elevation; though there was nothing like absolute intoxication, so far as I could judge."

It was otherwise, however, at the "Kirk House" with some of its frequenters. Stirling especially makes mention of the "squire," the old merchant, and the veteran who acted as the parish butcher. "When these three," he says, "were seen by me going from the "Kirk House," staggering, swearing, and



RACHEL WEeping FOR HER CHILDREN.

tumbling all three over each other, it was at the time my fear that they were all going down to the 'ill place,' little thinking that I and my boon companions would be exhibiting the same awful picture forty years afterwards." It was often predicted that some one or other of these three cronies would not come to a fair "strae death," as was predicted in the case of another noted tippler—

"She prophesied that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drowned in Doon."

It was suspected that one of them at least did meet with an untimely end. Be this as it may, the "squire" and the old travelling merchant drank all their property, so that not a rood of the lands they owned came into the possession of any of their relatives.

The landlord of the "Kirk House," according to the testimony of Stirling, was a coarse, swearing sot; but the wife was a quiet, pious, broken-hearted woman. She had several daughters, who did not turn out well, and who were to her a source of the deepest grief. Her mind became affected, and latterly she got into a state of settled melancholy. She could not bear the drunken brawls that frequently took place in her dwelling, and her mind constantly brooded over what she regarded as the "ruin" of her daughters.

"Many a long summer day," says Stirling, "she sat on the grave-stones behind the house weeping, rather than listen to the oaths and curses of the drunkards. But, alas! her daughters were not so; they mingled with all who came,

till they were ruined. I thought at that time my mistress was weeping for the dead who lay in peace around in the churchyard, but I have since learned that it was for the living within her own dwelling."

What an illustration of the evils connected with a public-house! What a picture of hopeless misery! Nature is soothing to us in the time of sorrow; and this poor woman, driven from her home by drunken riot, or by sad musings about the fate of her daughters, seeks refuge in the quiet churchyard. She goes there day after day, and on the flat grave-stones, beneath the rustling foliage of the plane-trees which surround that resting-place of the dead, or in that corner of it darkened by the sombre shadows of the yew-trees, she sits swaying to and fro, and weeping out her bursting heart. Meanwhile she is frequently observed by the herd-boy, and he naturally concludes that her sorrow is too sacred to be intruded upon, and that she weeps for the dead; but he soon learns that her sorrow is for the living, and for those of her own house.

Look back seventy years, and group all the circumstances together; recall the old gray kirk, the quiet kirk-yard, and the lovely scenery all around it: the lofty range of hills immediately in the back-ground, and the glorious panorama stretching far away to the south and west, in which are blended a thousand varied features of loveliness; and then turn to the mother, as she sits on the grave-stone in the corner of the kirk-yard, buried in the multitude of her own sad thoughts, an object of sympathy and wonder to the

herd-boy, who is looking over the wall; and then pass into the public-house at the gate, and see the coarse, swearing, drunken landlord, and his boon companions, and his children hastening to ruin, and this heritor and the other staggering homewards drunk, and you have the evils connected with a public-house strangely and horribly commingled with all that is peaceful and pure, lovely and sublime in nature, and with all that is hallowing in the immediate precincts of a parish sanctuary, nestled at the foot of the green range of Campsie Hills, and in one of the loveliest of our Scottish straths. What a blot upon the beauty of nature, and what a sad picture of the evils of drinking, is seen in that poor mother weeping in the quiet kirk-yard! She has long since gone to her rest, where she so often wept; but no one who ever reads the graphic words of Stirling that depict her sufferings, and who shall visit the kirk-yard at Strathblane, can fail to see her still weeping there, like "Rachel for her children, and will not be comforted." To the eye of fancy there she still sits and weeps on the grave-stone beneath the spreading plane-tree, the type of many mothers who weep at this moment over their fondest hopes, crushed in the dust by the hoof of the destroyer.

Jamie remained five years as "cowherd and ploughboy" on the small farm connected with the "Kirk House" tavern; but, from his occupation being out of doors, and from the watchful care of his parents, especially his mother, who lived at Kirkland, in the immediate neighbourhood—he seems to have passed these five years almost, if not alto-

gether, without even knowing the taste of whisky. It may seem strange to some of our readers that a woman of his mother's prudence and piety should have allowed her boy to be engaged in connection with such a house; but it must be borne in mind that public-houses were at that time considered as necessary and respectable establishments, and were not at all at such a low ebb in general estimation as they now are. But a few fields lay between the public-house and the parental cottage at Kirkland, and it was greatly to Jamie's advantage during the five years that he was "cowherd and ploughboy," that he slept beneath his father's roof. This, he often admitted in after years, was a great blessing, as it saved him from witnessing many a nightly carousal at the "Kirk House," and from hearing the coarse ribaldry with which these drunken bouts were but too often associated. The day was closed in that cottage at Kirkland with family worship, the treble voice of the mother leading the tune; then came the weekly "catechizing" on Sabbath, whilst the father's judicious counsel to the "younkers" generally took the range of topics ascribed by the poet to the cottar—

"And oh! be sure to mind the Lord alway!
And mind your duty duly morn and night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore his counsel and assisting might;
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright."

The hallowed influences springing from such simple scenes and exercises as these took a strong hold on the deepest

affections of childhood, and were among the most fondly cherished memories, at once a check and an impulse, during the darkest days of drinking in after years. These memories ran like a silver thread along the whole line of a very checkered life, till blending at last with the profound gratitude, the matured piety, the chastened experience, the many trials of extreme old age, to which they were at once a happy retrospect and a present joy. This was the frequent and grateful admission of the aged reformer, when looking back upon his past life from the summit of fourscore years:—

“From scenes like those old Scotia’s grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad.”

His next turn in life was that of leaving the “Kirk House,” which he did when about twelve years of age, and was hired to be a shepherd and drover of cattle to and from Balfron moors and the surrounding hills, “where,” he says, “I laboured for twelve months, through summer and winter, in wet and dry, cold and heat. My clothes were sometimes wet for weeks together.” And yet, in the midst of all this external discomfort, the boy had much real enjoyment. At that early period, and ever afterwards, he had an intense love of beautiful scenery. In his native parish he revelled amid the beauties of nature. Referring to his herd-boy days, he speaks of the delight he enjoyed in “contemplating the wonders of creative power in earth and sky, in mountain and stream, in hill and dale, in wind and rain, in clouds and sunshine.” In old age, and after all his wanderings, he

often used to say, "I have never seen any place like Strath-blane." And it would be difficult in broad Scotland to find a strath possessing more of those varied features which constitute at once the placid, the picturesque, and the sublime in a landscape. And here we shall be excused if we devote a few sentences to this lovely vale, in connection with Stirling's strong love of the beautiful in nature, which was with him, even in boyhood, a master passion.

Ascend the hill at the back of Ballagan House, and walk along the side of that deep gorge which has cleft the hill in twain, the sides of which are in some places, especially in the west, as bare as if they had been scathed but a few hours ago with lightning, whilst in other places they are overshadowed with all the bright and varied foliage of June, as that is to be seen in the ash, the elm, the birch, the ivy, and the tasselled larch, hanging over the rifted and the precipitous rocks. Up higher still, amid the waving foliage! higher yet! and now what a gash has been made in the brow of the hill, and in those riven terraces of rocks, forming a vast amphitheatre of wild grandeur! Down the rugged gorge leap the thundering waters, dashing from cliff to cliff into the quiet bosom of the strath below. Higher yet, above "Ballagan spout!" and across the Blane. Pass along the brow of the hill westward, and pause to look about you at that point above the "Lady's Seat." What a magnificent prospect bursts upon your view! To the west, the queen of Scottish lakes and the green isles that gem her fair bosom, and rising by her side is the lord of mountains,

worthy of the name he bears, whilst a hundred other mountain vassals, huge and brawny, throw their giant shadows at her feet. Nearer are the strange, creeping, suspicious-looking, snub-like peaks of Dumgoyne and Dumfoyne, the one crawling up like a great monster, and the other creeping down, as if both were reluctant to terminate a range of hills so sweet as the Campsie Fells. But of all the woody knolls or hills in Strathblane, commend us to Dungoiach, with its waving crest of dark firs, like the black plume of a warrior's helmet. This hill, as seen tinged from base to summit with the golden radiance of sunset, from the old gray turrets of Duntreath Castle, has not its equal for picturesque beauty in itself, and in the scenery that surrounds it, in at least twenty counties. And then cast your eyes along the thickly wooded table-land of Craigallian, which the old snarling dictionary-maker, Samuel Johnson, never saw, or he would never have uttered the wicked libel against poor Scotland that he did. There were huge trees on the "Gallows Hill" near Mugdock Castle, long before the Doctor's day, or the hill would never have been associated with that species of "lynch law" which has given it its name, and which, in the olden times, was frequently put into practice. Where was Goldsmith when he wrote the following lines regarding Scotland?—"Shall I tire you with a description of this unfruitful country: where I must lead you over their hills all brown with heath, or their valleys scarcely able to feed a rabbit. Man alone seems to be the only creature who has arrived to the natural size in this poor soil. Every part of

the country presents the same dismal landscape. No grove nor brook lend their music to cheer the stranger, or make the inhabitants forget their poverty." Wherever Goldsmith was, it is clear he was not in Strathblane, for there are trees in this parish that must have been "tall ancestral" monarchs before his grandfather was born. But peace to the ashes of old Sam, and his eccentric lovable friend Goldy! And surely we can afford to say as much under the soothing influence of such scenery; for what a wide and varied expanse stretches far away into the dim horizon south and east! The upland portion of the parish to the south, as seen from the opposite hill, is, on a clear summer day, literally gemmed with tarns, or little lakes, that seem like so many bright eyes peeping out from amongst the thick woods, or lighting up the dark, grim visage of the moors. Strathblane, with its beautifully situated mansions, such as Mugdock Castle, Leddrie Green, Ballagan, Craigends Castle, the Manse, and many others; its soft green hills; its wooded terraces and heights, chief amongst which are Dungoiach and the Park Hill, wooded to the summit; its bare and bluff peaks; its bright lakelets, embosomed amid trees, or lying open on the moor; its deep green woods; its merry pattering streams; its well-tilled cosy farms; its dashing waterfalls, forms within itself a strath of exquisite beauty, whilst from almost any of its heights may be obtained a view of the wide expanse stretching from Tinto to the lofty Ben. Our surprise is that Strathblane parish has never produced a poet, so far as we know, and that no poet has as yet given it, in the

productions of his muse, "a local habitation and a name." That Stirling had not only the poetic susceptibility, but the poet's fire and feeling and power of description, was evident to any one who heard him speak. But this gift was not cultivated, as it probably would have been but for the baneful influence of his drinking habits. The elements of song were in him, and were occasionally called forth in formal rhyme, whilst the poetic fire glowed in every speech he made. It was this that gave him such an intense love of nature, and which yielded him so much pure enjoyment amid all the discomforts of his lot. Whilst a mere boy he would gaze in rapture upon the beauties of his native strath, every hill of which he had climbed, and every nook of which he had explored. With such feelings as these, and in the midst of scenery so well calculated to foster them, time did not hang heavily upon his hands, neither did the external discomforts to which he refers crush his spirit.

He had another source of enjoyment in the few books which he read, and which were his fondly cherished companions amid the solitudes of the mountain and the moor. On this subject we shall quote his own words,—and they are words of which Scotland and her peasantry may justly feel proud—words fraught with useful lessons to the toiling and the struggling youth of our country:—

"While I was at my sheep and cattle herding I always took such books as came in my way to the moors with me, and read them there. Amongst them were the *Pilgrim's Progress*; Sir David Lindsay of the Mount's four books of

Monarchy, Experience and the Courtier, Complaint of the Papingos, and The Curate and Kitty, all in rhyme; *The Scottish Worthies, Flavel's Husbandry Spiritualized, History of Britain* by Stackhouse, *Wallace and Bruce, Robinson Crusoe, The Gentle Shepherd, Robin Hood, Æsop's Fables*, together with what history and geography fell into my hands, all of which were eagerly devoured. When reading *Wallace*, and some passages in the *Scottish Worthies*, my heart swelled to my throat. Then would I read aloud to give vent to my feelings, until the tears flowed in streams from my eyes. Sometimes I thought the sheep and the cows were listening; but be that as it may, my honest collie [his dog] was no inattentive hearer. When he heard me become loud, and saw the tears falling, he howled most piteously along with me for a while, and if I did not stop soon after he began, he would bark and snap at my face till silence was restored; then would look 'blythe' and cheerful, and fawn on me and lick my 'hackit' feet. Thus, though among beasts all day, far away from the dwellings of men, and often cold, wet, and hungry, sources of purely rational enjoyment and improvement were not awanting. The volumes of revelation and nature, history and poetry, beguiled the tedious hours, sweetened the toils, and calmed the bitterness of mind arising from poverty and servitude; elevating me, in my own estimation, to be one of nature's own nobility."

There is true poetry in this graphic description. Here is a scene that would have formed a fit subject for Wilkie, and

which we now suggest to our modern painters, an appropriate title to which might be the "Poetry of the Moor." The herd-boy "greetin'" from the very excess of his ardent feelings, when reading aloud on the moor to the listening cattle, listening, as he thought, to the thrilling story of Wallace and the Covenanters, and "collie greetin'" in his own way, too, at what he thought to be the sorrow of his young master; and then, as a balm to that, looking "blythe" and cheerful, and fawning upon him, and licking his "hackit" feet.

This "collie" of the "herd laddie" was a worthy brother of honest "Luath," who, in describing the happiness of the cottage circle on New Year's morn, in the dialogue of the "Twa Dogs," says:—

"The cantie auld folks crackin' crouse,
The young anes rantin' through the house,
My heart has been sæ fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them."

The list of books given in the above extract was indeed a very miscellaneous collection; in short the boy read whatever came in his way, and it is somewhat curious how he happened to lay his hands on the rhymes of the old quaint satirist Sir David Lindsay on the moors of Balfron. The feelings with which he read the story of Wallace and the old Covenanters, and which are the common feelings of the people,—for Scotland upon this point has ever been sound at the heart's core,—are after all the best monument to the

patriot and the martyrs, whatever outward symbol may be adopted for the embodiment of feelings that lie deep in every Scottish heart. Professor Wilson once told us that he had a poem of considerable length lying in his desk on the "Covenanters," which would never be published during his lifetime, whatever might become of it after his death. On asking him the reason for his determination, his reply was characteristic and striking,—“The Covenanters, sir, stand so high in the feelings of the Scottish people, that these feelings are themselves a poem, which it would be difficult if not impossible for any poem to reach.”

As he uttered these words he raised himself to his full height (what a noble physique he had!), strode along the floor of his “sanctum” with a thick, knotted rung in his hand, which ever and anon was brought down upon the well-worn carpet with an emphasis as if he were on his native heath. His gleaming eye, wonderfully expressive, his long flowing, auburn locks falling on his broad shoulders with glorious *abandon*, his leonine form and features, are still vividly before us. There is much truth in the above utterance of the renowned Christopher, and perhaps the best illustration that could be given of it is the experience of Stirling himself.

Another source of enjoyment which the boy had at this time was in his religious feelings and exercises. The solitude of the moor often became a very “Bethel,” a glorious temple, peopled with bright visions and hopes. He was now from home, but he did not neglect the duty of prayer,

and in this again is to be seen the salutary influence of parental example and advice. "In Balfroon," he says, "two of the men had their beds beside mine in an outhouse; the one went every night to the barn, the other to the byre to pray. My resort was an old stane dyke, round the 'kail yard.'" All three were to be commended for this, but especially the younger of the three, who had little more than entered his "teens." One night, when he was praying as usual, with his face towards the old "stane dyke," he was sadly frightened with a "hissing something," and a "villainous stench," which he could not explain. In his boyish thoughts,—and, perhaps, it might have occurred to one of riper years,—he imagined that the enemy of all prayer had done this to drive him from this duty. It made him shift his praying-ground, but could not force him to quit his praying. The mystery remained unsolved for some time, till "collie" found it out at last, by discovering one day, in the old "stane dyke," a colony of weasels, one of which seized him by the "wick of the mouth," whilst twenty other heads showed fight by puffing and grinning from various openings in the wall. On this Stirling quaintly remarks, "I was at last convinced that it was not a devil but a weasel that drove me from my praying-ground. Although the idea of satanic opposition did not make me desist from duty, drinking and bad companions did." What have these two evils not done! drinking and bad companions! They have been the ruin of countless thousands, and they were the cause of many dark years of suffering to the subject of this memoir.

The twelve months which he spent on the moors at Balfron formed a very important period of his life. His reading was greatly extended, and his love for books greatly increased.

A country tailor is a most important personage, especially when he plies his useful calling far away from the competition or intrusive innovations of large towns or villages, and where he has everything his own way, among hinds, and cottars, and simple farmers, undisturbed by any change of fashion, and where the "newest London cut" has never broken his slumbers nor scared his peaceful dreams. His visits round the parish are quite an era, particularly in those dwellings where Robin, or Pate, or Sandy, or some other expectant youngster, has to make the important transition from the equivocal garb of lassiehood into his first "corduroys," radiant all round with bright yellow buttons. Which of these youngsters, on the night previous to the tailor's visit, has not gone to bed and almost

. . . "wept for downright sorrow,
To think the night must pass before the morrow?"

And then what joy when the newly fledged "wee man" thrust his hands for the first time into his own pockets, and felt their wondrous "vast depths!" No pocket ever could, would, or should be so deep as that, and no "bawbees" were ever so highly valued as those which were kindly given to "hansel" the first "*calches*" of the "coming man."

Nor was the tailor's visit less a matter of interest and

anticipation to the senior portion of the inmates in farmhouse or cottage. He brought with him all the news of the district, and as his stay generally extended over a few days, more or less according to the number of garments he had to make, he had ample time to empty his budget to a highly delighted circle. The country tailor fifty years ago was generally a shrewd, intelligent, well-read man, fond of a joke, and possessing not a little sly inquisitiveness, which, from the roving familiarity of his life, did even more than border at times upon the impudent. Notwithstanding all this few visitors were more welcome at the moorland farmhouse than the tailor; for when he got fairly seated, "*a la mode*" his profession, on the top of the great kitchen table or chest, or on the huge "meal girdle" at the window, and if the day were one of heavy rain, and nothing could be done out of doors, then was the tailor on his throne and in the zenith of his power, "the observed of all observers," from the "gudeman" down to the delighted herd-boy, and jokes and stories, and all that was going on at this farmhouse and the other, and all the courtships and intended marriages in the parish, and all the news about kirks, and ministers, and sessions, and sacraments, and cases of discipline, in at least ten parishes, circled with a speed that kept pace with the flying needle; whilst the "gudewife" plied her spinning-wheel, and the "gudeman" repaired some old farm "gear," and all the rest were busy at some useful thing or another.

Such scenes were often witnessed in the farmhouse in the parish of Balfron, where the tailor was always a welcome

visitor. There was but one man who bade fair, especially amongst the youngsters, to undermine the influence of the "needle." This was a little man, who went far and near, (in short, nobody knew where he came from), and whose profession was that of cleaning clocks. His visits, however, were only "few and far between," but it was all over with the tailor on the day the clock-cleaner came. The tailor's stories had no attraction to the youngsters when the head of the old eight-day clock was taken off and all its mysterious mechanism taken down, and exposed to the wondering gaze of the delighted urchins. And then there were so many curious odd sort of things stowed away in the corners on the head of the clock, and when these were laid on the floor, one after one, amongst which were bunches of old chamomile flowers, and various kinds of dried herbs, and fishing tackle, and little paper parcels innumerable, containing every sort of "orra" thing, the urchins regarded the head of that old clock as Goldsmith's rustics did their schoolmaster—

"And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew."

Nothing in the *Arabian Nights*—nothing about enchanted palaces, or fairy queens, or Aladdin and his wonderful lamp, or the hanging gardens of Babylon, or Sinbad the sailor, or the riches of Bagdad, could equal that wondrous display of wheels and pivots and pulleys from the strange old head of that clock, on the face of which there was a ship always in great distress, day and night "by tempest tossed," and yet

it never went down, and a half-moon, with the half of a man's face in it, that always seemed to be on the wane, and yet never grew less, and a flaming sun that threatened to burn up the old clock, but could not, because, as one of the boys said, "it couldn't rise above the sea."

What a day of delight! And when the wheels were polished, and oiled, and replaced, and the head was put on, and the old clock had his brains cleared and his face cleaned, and the heavy weights attached, and the pendulum adjusted and once more set a going, and the ship again heaved in distress, and the half-moon with one eye kept staring at the fire, and a sentinel, who had long slept at his post in defiance of all military discipline, because of some broken wire, again came out from his box to see if all was right—the joy of the youngsters exceeded all bounds, and they scarcely knew whether to wonder most at the head of that old clock, or at the head of that little, puffy, red-faced man who had taken it down and put it all up again. The clock-cleaner, with his old hat very bare in the nap and very glazed, and with his coat and trousers the exact counterpart of the hat, and a little black parcel in which he carried his implements, was looked upon as a sort of mysterious weird-like personage, especially in the moorland parts of the country, seventy years ago.

About that time four tailors were employed for a few days in the farmhouse where Stirling was a herd-boy. When they had nearly finished their work, a clock-cleaner came round and operated upon the old clock as already described.

The various habiliments were completed, and the head of the old clock was restored to its former place. But such a meeting could not be brought to a close without a "spree." The ploughmen therefore resolved to treat the whole five together, and for this purpose sent for several bottles of whisky. It was on this occasion that James Stirling first experienced in his own person the evils of dram-drinking. All were expected to partake, and the herd-boy amongst the rest.

His reluctance was overcome, and he took that night the first fatal step. The mirth "grew fast and furious." The "Sam Slick" of the party became personal, and unsparing with his wit, and kept taunting the tailors with the coarse slang that has been so long in use regarding their class. They, on the other hand, became irascible and peppery. High words ensued, and he of the clocks found that it was an easier matter to take down and put up a clock, than to heal a quarrel when it was begun. High words were followed by hard blows, and the farmhouse on the moor was for several hours after midnight the scene of drunken riot. Of this his first personal experience of drinking, Stirling says:—

"Oh what a day the next one was to me! Nothing I could either eat or drink had the right taste; my whole frame, from head to foot, was out of order. Though I ate bitter herbs, such as junipers, nothing could put the abominable taste out of my mouth, nor the pain out of my stomach and loins; which made me resolve never again to taste."

What an amount of misery he would have been spared had he carried out this good resolution! Nature and reason urged him to do so, but all the drinking customs of society were leagued both against the one and the other, and though he had to strive hard against both in becoming a drinker, these customs overpowered him, as they have done many others, and a long dark career of drinking now lay before him.

In the winter of 1787, when he was thirteen years of age, his clothes, from the tear and wear of every day, and from exposure to rain on the unsheltered moors, became, as he says, "literally rotted on his back." He was therefore permitted to go home from the moors of Balfron to Kirkland, that his old clothes might be replaced by a new suit. It was not an easy matter to clothe so many youngsters, especially when the father had been now for some years laid aside from his work on account of a severe illness. He had over-heated himself one summer working at hay. The day was oppressively hot, and after dinner he lay down to rest for a little in the hay field. He fell asleep, and was drenched by a heavy shower of rain that fell. This brought on a lingering illness, which carried him off in the prime of life. Jean Drysdale had thus to nurse her sick husband and provide for the upbringing of her numerous family. But He who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," and who "stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind," did not fail her.

But how was the herd-boy to get his clothes that had

"rotted on his back" replaced by a new suit? In those days our peasantry and humbler classes knew nothing of the modern expedient of getting clothes by paying a weekly or a monthly instalment. In rural districts very little cloth came from the hands of the draper. Every cottage had its spinning-wheel, and it was a rare thing for a bride, in the humblest walks of life, to be married without one or more. Few, if any, could match Jean Drysdale at spinning, sewing, and knitting, and thus when she and her family were at times sore bestead, and when one would have thought with honest Luath—

"A wee touch langer,
And they maun starve o' cauld and hunger—"

she had in her a noble spirit of independence which shuddered at the bare idea of being a pauper, and in her spinning-wheel, her knitting-needle, her blythe, cheerful, thrifty ways, and, above all, in her unfailing trust in God, she had resources which enabled her to bring up her children in godly decency, although, to use her own expression, she was "*forfoughten sair at times*."

She spun the wool into yarn, and dyed it with her own hands. Her dyeing skill did not extend merely to one, but to many colours. But only one colour, however, and that the standing "Presbyterian blue," was required for Jamie's clothes. She sent the yarn to a "customer weaver," quite a character, who lived in the neighbourhood, and who had a hand in the outfits or the "plenishings" of all the brides

in the parish. When the cloth was finished it was brought home, but not before the "warping gill" had been drunk, and other gills at different stages of the process; and then the tailor was sent for, and Jamie's rotten clothes soon gave place to a new suit of his mother's spinning.

We love to think of those old customer weavers, who have nearly all "ceased out of the land," unless one here and there, who keeps his ground against all modern innovations and improvements that have dispensed with the spinning-wheel and the "customer" loom. We associate with those old men scenes of rural loveliness—the weaver's cot standing by itself, a great object of interest to the blooming, blushing, country lass, who was preparing her bridal things; and to mothers, who were glad to see their "bairns respeckit like the lave," and who were anxious to see them leave with a decent "plenishing"—the "birr" of the shuttle on a summer day, blending with the hum of the bee and the murmur of the stream near by, or the grave psalm chant within: for many of those weavers were pious men, and douce elders in the meeting-house or the kirk. What a contrast between the one loom in that cottage with a "but and a ben," from which has been filled many a chest with pure white linen and warm blankets some sixty years ago, and the weaving shed of modern times containing a thousand looms! Notwithstanding all the improvements of Arkwright and Watt, there was more of the true poetry of life in that one cottage, around the productions of which clustered the anxious thoughts of many a mother and many a no less anxious bride, than there

can be in ten thousand such sheds. But then as to real utility there is no comparison between the two, and all that is merely sentimental must of course give way to the useful. But still if we can do no more, let us say, all honour to those good old "customer weavers" and all the plenishings that passed through their hands! And no less would we say, all honour to the industry, and thrift, and good management, of such a mother as Jean Drysdale! A plaid which she made to her son James when he was herding, spun and dyed with her own hands, and woven by a "customer weaver," is still shown with no small degree of pride by one of her grandchildren. And yet she must have been sore bestead at times, for James used to say that he frequently went, when a boy, a distance of three miles to the clachan of Campsie with yarn of his mother's spinning, and sold it there to a person who employed weavers. The money thus obtained served to purchase meal, in time to provide for the family's breakfast next morning. In those days flour or loaf-bread was a rarity, and tea had not come into use amongst the peasantry except on very special occasions. Widows and lonely female cottagers were employed by many of the farmers at spinning, and this, combined with the lighter kind of out-door labour in the season of hay-making or harvest, procured for them an honest decent living. The flax grown by the farmers on their own lands, and the wool from their own sheep, supplied the raw material for the domestic manufactures of those days. The dyeing process, as well as the spinning, was generally gone through at the fireside.

All this tended to foster that sturdy spirit of independence and self-reliance which characterized our forefathers, and of which Jean Drysdale was a noble example. We have doubtless gained in many things by the improvements of the last fifty years, gained immeasurably, but we have lost not a little of that old stern spirit of self-reliance which scorned a pauper's roll, and fed, and clothed, and schooled the great bulk of the people in the olden time.

We have had a design in giving prominence to this excellent woman in these sketches. Her position in life was humble; her struggles varied and severe; but her virtues dignified that lowly station, and her example and her worth may well command the imitation and the respect of every mother in the land. We have dwelt longer than we at first intended on the early days of James Stirling, our object being to illustrate the struggles, the worth, and the piety of humble cottage life—to hold up that worth which has often dignified the lot of the toiling poor, that we might give it a voice of hope and encouragement to all, but especially to those who now tread the rough and thorny by-ways of daily toil.

CHAPTER III.

CAREER IN PAISLEY.

VENTS that seem very trivial and limited in their range of influence at the time, are often the very things which give a bright or a dark colouring to our future history, and form what may be termed the turning-point in our lives. When young Stirling was at home getting his new clothes, at the time referred to in the previous chapter, he was desirous of aiding his mother in some of her domestic duties. A potful of potatoes, intended for the family's supper, were boiling on the fire. He lifted the pot to pour the water off, but like one out of his proper sphere of labour, he did not succeed, for he says—"I poured the boiling water on my foot, and scalded it so very badly, that I was obliged to remain at home so long that another herd was got to fill the place I left." This misfortune put an end to his shepherd life, and was the means of getting him apprenticed to an occupation which he followed for nearly half-a-century. He had a sister married sometime before this to a shoemaker in Paisley, who was foreman to Robert Clark, whose shoe-shop was at the Cross, near to what was then and long afterwards known as the "*Hole i' the wa'.*"

At the earnest solicitation of Mr. Clark's foreman, their

son-in-law, the parents agreed that James should go to Paisley and learn the shoemaking trade. This was in 1788; and certainly the prospects of the shoemakers at that time were anything but bright, or their circumstances comfortable, if we are to judge of these from the statements of a veteran shoemaker, long resident in Paisley, and now considerably above ninety years of age, and who has a distinct recollection of the time when Stirling began his apprenticeship. At that period, he says, shoemakers were paid one shilling for making a pair of men's shoes, and a little more for women's. The wages then were just about one-third of what they are at present.

In April, 1788, young Stirling set out from the lovely scenes of his youth to Paisley, and was apprenticed to a trade which has been at various times associated with the names of many eminent men, such as the celebrated missionaries Morrison and Carey, Bloomfield the poet, Gifford, the original conductor of the *Quarterly Review*, a man of distinguished literary ability, Samuel Drew, author of the well-known essay on the "Immortality and Immateriality of the Soul," Linnæus the naturalist, George Fox of Quaker celebrity, Partridge, physician to Charles the Second, and many others, amongst whom we must not omit to mention John Kitto, a name that stands foremost in the ranks of those who have devoted their talents to the illustration of the Holy Scriptures, and whose whole life was one continued struggle abreast of difficulties that would have crushed any ordinary man. Nor would we forget

“John Pounds,” the lame cobbler, and the founder of Ragged Schools, whose gentle large-hearted philanthropy has shed a lustre over the very occupation itself, far more than the most brilliant talents or the greatest acquirements could have done.

It would be invidious, perhaps, to compare one class of tradesmen with another as to drinking, but without at all wishing to make any invidious comparison, or to depreciate in any way whatever, or to condemn a whole class for the conduct of a few, still it would require something more than the broadest charity to conceal the fact, that the sons of St. Crispin, as well as the descendants of Vulcan, have had too frequently a “spark in their throat.” Our friend the veteran shoemaker, who has nearly reached his hundredth year, says that journeymen shoemakers have generally been hard drinkers. Stirling knew this also to his cost. Referring to the time when he became a son of St. Crispin, he says:—

“Alas! what a change, when, in April, 1788, I was set down in an old garret in Paisley among eight or ten shoemakers, some of them old soldiers and men-of-war’s men; some Highland, some Lowland, and some Englishmen! Oh! what a change of company, language, manners, and morals! It was like a new world. I found that I had been taken from among sober, well-bred beasts, and placed amongst drunken savage men. Before a week passed it was decreed by the laws of the shop that my block should be paid on the Monday following. This was a sum of money which all new-

comers had to pay for the purpose of getting a 'grand spree' at drinking. No matter how poor and forlorn the tramp or apprentice might be, no excuse would, could, or did avail. The master had to pay a shilling, the journeymen fourpence each at every block, and thus a sum was raised which procured a large supply when the real 'Kilbagie' was sold at little more than a penny per gill. Remembering what whisky had made me suffer before upon the moors of Balfron, when the tailors and the clock-cleaner and the ploughmen got drunk, I stood out against it; but all the workmen in that dingy garret told me that I would never be a good workman nor a man if I did not plump my 'caulker' and drink with the rest of them. I might bundle up and go back to the mountains and the moors among the beasts, but I could never be a fit companion for men if I did not take off my glass. The change to me was so great that I could not help shedding many salt tears, which I tried to hide but could not. This only increased the rude merriment of my tormentors. 'Fine him a gill,' cried one, 'for showing the white feather.' 'Send him back to his mammy's apron-strings,' said another. 'He's a greenhorn,' said a third, 'but we'll soon season him and make him turn up his little finger with the best.' I will not repeat the many coarse jokes with which my refusal to pay my block was met. I was for a time shocked and bewildered, and I could not help thinking that the beasts I had left were far better company than such men. And then the garret was so low-roofed, so ill-ventilated, so badly lighted, and so filled with the fumes

of tobacco and whisky, and all so different from the mountains and the moors, and the rural loveliness of my native strath, that I thought at first I could not live in such a place. Through taunting, bantering, and entreating, however, they did prevail upon me to go to a public-house with them and drink. Next day I was so ill I told them that I thought I would die with the poison they had caused me to drink, at which they renewed their coarse banter, and said, 'You're but a Johnny-raw yet, but we'll make a man of you. You'll never grow better; you are sure to die if you don't take a 'hair of the dog that bit you.'

"I had paid my block, and all the men in the garret had had a night's drinking; but it did not end here, for they had no inclination to begin work next day, and every device was tried how to get more drink. For myself, poor fellow! I saw that if I was to live at peace with them I must, however reluctantly, comply with their ways. This was evil counsel, but so I counselled with myself. They were raging mad for more drink, and some said, '*Kick the cork,*' or as they sometimes used to vary the expression, '*Bleed the master.*' But the 'cork' would neither 'kick' nor 'bleed.' Others said, Try 'Painch Bell' (a well-known character at that time in Paisley) to 'tick' you a bottle till Saturday; but Bell would not 'tick.' The last shift was all hands to work, searching their settles for 'cabbage,' or bits of leather, and when all had mustered what they could, every one made a calculation as to what it would bring. As I was the only apprentice in the shop I was ordered forthwith to go

to a person of the name of Goosey Maxwell. I was informed that he got this name on account of a waggish painter who one night, when returning home, as usual, in a state of elevation, painted a goose above Maxwell's door, accompanied with some words that afforded no small amusement to the people when passing next day before Maxwell got out of bed. Be this as it may, I was ordered off to Goosey Maxwell with the pieces of leather, and this was the first time that I heard the word 'cabbage' applied in this way. I refused at first, but it was of no use, I must go. It was my first lesson in the wicked chicanery of drunken shoemakers, and the first time I was compelled to be an accomplice in carrying it out. My conscience smote me, but the success of the experiment, and the applause I received, drowned the voice to which I should have listened, and emboldened me, without any hesitation, to go often afterwards upon the same errand. The 'cabbage' sold that day brought one shilling and threepence. When the result was announced plaudits of joy rang through the shop. 'Hurrah! He's a plucky little dog. Hurrah! This will get a bottle of the real 'stingo' and two pints of Ralston's caldron ale.'

"Great praise was bestowed on me in order to tempt me to go for the drink, which I was again compelled to do, though sore against my will. Having brought it, they used every entreaty to make me take a 'heaver,' as they called it, which was no sooner done than it made me vomit as I had never done before, to the great joy of all the men, who swore that that would heal me. 'You'll be the brave hero

by-and-by,' which was too truly the case. I could not bear the taste of whisky then. Repeated entreaties and tasting, however, brought me on so far that I could very soon swallow it with little remorse. By the time I was a journeyman shoemaker it might have been truly said that I was a journeyman drunkard. I became as reckless as any of them; and so much was I reconciled to their customs that, when out on the 'spree' with them, when any one got drunk (though only sixteen years of age then) I would take him in my arms and dance about with him in the form of bagpipes, his legs over my shoulders for drones, one arm for the chanter, the other in my mouth as the '*blaw-stick*,' making a noise like a piper playing, whilst all who were able to dance would do so along with me. Though much younger than any of them I was much stronger. They were all afraid to attack me single-handed. Such was the effect of drinking upon them, that they all admitted I was the strongest in the shop, but that by-and-by I would have less strength to boast of."

Such is Stirling's graphic and humiliating account of the commencement of his drinking career amongst the drunken shoemakers of Paisley, about 1788. It was a period of his life to which he always referred with the deepest regret. He often said that it was here that his degradation commenced. The change from the country to the town was to him as it has been to many others—the first step in a downward career. The last time he was in Paisley, a few years ago, when passing along the High Street, in company with

a friend, he paused at an entry leading to some back build-ings, about the "Star Inn Close," and observed, with much emotion, "It was in a garret down that close where I served my apprenticeship to the making of shoes and the drinking of whisky."

There is a striking resemblance between the garret life of Alton Locke in the vast wilderness of London, as described by Charles Kingsley, and that of the young shoemaker in the High Street of Paisley. Such scenes, alas! are still too common, and form, whatever may be thought of them, the great social problem of our day—a problem for which, in our estimation, there is but one solution, and it is in the hands of working men themselves, and one which they could easily bring to a most successful issue, not certainly in the way of *strikes*, which have been such a curse to working men, but in the way in which James Stirling did it when he shook himself free from the degrading vice which had so long held him in bondage.

The drinking habits to which we have referred were not by any means confined to the journeymen shoemakers; but the masters, the "grave and reverend signiors" of the corporation of the "cordwainers," had their own drinking customs, their own special seasons of jollification, as well as the humbler sons of the "awl and the last." We do not profess to know a great deal about this venerable corporation, but we remember of having once seen, and but once, a shoemakers' procession, and still there rise up from the depths of the past at this moment gaudy flaunting silk flags,

and martial music, and well-dressed men, and crowds of onlookers, who were especially delighted with a tall, notable personage, of dignified bearing and commanding aspect, who seemed to be rolled in many folds of silk, and covered with gold lace, or something like it, and who wore a crown upon his head, and who had an immense train borne up by his youthful pages. This was King Crispin for the day. And we recollect of hearing of the various gradations of rank in the "Cordwainers'" Corporation, through which a master's son or any youthful aspirant to the high honours of the brotherhood was expected to pass, such as "*making assay*"—that is, making an attempt, however humble, in the formation of a shoe, or searching the market for goods that could be seized, or when the still more important honours of a "gowdie" were conferred, in the permission which was then granted to "snuff the candles and to keep the keys." At all these important stages in the history of the youthful aspirant who sought to be one of the brotherhood, or who had an eye to the honours of a deacon or a convener, there was, of course, a jollification, and nothing could, would, or should be done by the old cordwainers without drink.

A glance at the social and religious condition of Paisley at the time to which Stirling refers may not be out of place. The weaving population at that time were in a highly prosperous state. They were the most sober, intelligent, and pious class of tradesmen in the kingdom. They built a considerable portion of the town out of their own earnings.

Whole streets, especially in the west-end, consisting of decent "bien-like" houses, sprung from the loom. They were the gentlemen tradesmen of the time, fond of their little gardens, which they kept in first-rate order, there being a keen rivalry amongst many of them as to who would rear the finest vegetables and flowers. The weaver of that time was just our *beau ideal* of an intelligent, virtuous, and comfortable tradesman. In point of high wages, social position, comfort, intelligence, and moral worth, the Paisley weavers, as a class, were the aristocracy of British workmen. We have been often struck with the large number of weavers' names that appear in the lists of subscribers to high-priced and valuable books published about that time.

Alas! what a change now! with the same class of tradesmen in the same place, compared with the palmy days when the means of procuring a university education could easily be furnished by the loom, and in many cases were so; and when Wilson and Tannahill shed the halo of their genius around it; and M'Gavin, the author of the *Protestant*, though he had the misfortune to burn his first web, found the next one very remunerative, and has left on record the following testimony:—"The weavers' hours of labour were moderate, yet they were so well paid that they could dress like gentlemen, and many of them bought houses with their savings."

The shoemakers in Paisley were at that time in very different circumstances. They were at a very low ebb both

as regards sobriety and intelligence, and doubtless their low wages, long hours, and drinking habits, must have been the chief cause of this. Stirling felt himself most unhappy, and on turning to his memoranda we find the following entry:—

“Oh, how sad was the change that I now experienced! from converse with God in prayer, in his word and works, from contemplating the wonders of creative power in earth and sky, in mountain and stream, in hill and dale, to a dingy low-roofed garret; from hearing the heath-cock hail the new-born day, and the bleating of lambs blended with the varied notes of the cuckoo and the curlew, the plover and the lark, the blackbird and the thrush, to the unhallowed sounds of oaths and curses, and shop-slang, and disgusting and low and filthy language. Instead of knowing the time when I should eat my ‘*pease bannocks*’ and *flat whey* for dinner by the sun, when he got right above Dungoyne, I was now warned by the Tolbooth clock; and instead of knowing when to ‘*wear*’ my sheep to the ‘*fauld*’ by the sun sinking behind the ‘lofty Ben Lomond,’ the ten o’clock bell sounded the welcome hour when I might rest from toil and retire to sleep, and dream over the polluting scenes of the past day. My life was miserable in the company of such beings, compared with my former companions—‘*collie*,’ the cattle, and the sheep. I could pray amongst them without fear of being laughed at, but here all pretension to religion was a subject of ridicule, and the duty of prayer was soon given up.”

He had long hours for toil, and the weary, long-continued

labour must have greatly deadened his love of reading. Kitto complained of the same thing when labouring at the same occupation.

“There was a time (he says), by far the most dreary in that portion of my career, when an employment was found for me, to which I proceeded about six o’clock in the morning, and from which I returned not till about ten at night. I murmured not at this; for I knew that life had grosser duties than those to which I would gladly have devoted all my hours; and I dreamed not that a life of literary occupation might be within reach of my hopes. This was, however, a terrible time for me, as it left me so little leisure for what had become my sole enjoyment, if not my sole good. I submitted, I acquiesced, I tried hard to be happy, but it would not do; my heart gave way, notwithstanding my manful struggles to keep it up, and I was really thoroughly miserable. Twelve hours I could have borne. I have tried it; and know that the leisure which twelve hours would have left me would have satisfied me; but sixteen hours, and often eighteen, out of the twenty-four, was more than I could bear. To come home weary and sleepy, and then to have only for mental sustenance the moments which, by self-imposed tortures, could be torn from needful rest, was a sore trial. And now that I look back upon this time, the amount of study which I did’under these circumstances contrive to get through amazes and confounds me, notwithstanding that my habits of application remain to this day strong and vigorous.”

Stirling's love of reading, however, did not wholly leave him amid the loose companions and drinking scenes to which he was exposed, as we learn from the following extract:—

“An old man who kept a small circulating library came into the garret one day seeking readers for his books at a penny per week. There were nine men in the shop, but I was the only one who put down my name, although I did not know very well where the penny was to come from. At length some four of the men, who had got into debt with the master, ran off to England, leaving wives and families behind them. Some young men not so degraded came in their place. They were willing enough to read the books which I got from the library, but they would not pay for them. The only one which was a favourite with them was *Tom Jones, the Foundling*, consisting of three volumes, which they requested me to get; but, alas! an old man of ours who was still with us got on the ‘spree,’ as usual, and when other means failed him he carried off the ‘*Foundling*’ and drank him. He had the impudence to send for me to a public-house and treat me to drink, but he denied the theft. Now I was in an awful plight, not knowing what to do with the old man at the circulating library. Without letting him know that the ‘*Foundling*’ was sold, I called upon him every week and paid him a penny, although it cost me many a weary plan to get it. In about six months the old man died, so I got clear. My desire for reading gradually died away, now that I saw that books could be stolen and drunk.”

His difficulty in securing a penny per week for his books out of the old man's library, who seems to have been a kind of "Sandy Mackaye" in his way, and the various expedients which were adopted in order to raise this weekly moiety, remind us of the difficulties which poor Kitto experienced in obtaining the same small sum to gratify his love of reading, and the various shifts which he tried for this purpose. He was an apprentice shoemaker to a master who, had he been in the cotton plantations of Louisiana, would have been as bad as Legree. Stirling does not mention any ill usage he received such as Kitto suffered during his brief apprenticeship, but he frequently complains of the utterly wretched life he led amongst the drunken shoemakers of Paisley. His master, who was a sober, well-disposed man, had very frequently to go through the public-houses seeking his journeymen, and urging them to go to their work. It is sad to think that this picture of the operative shoemakers some seventy years ago bears but too close a resemblance to what still exists.

When Stirling left the parish school at Strathblane he could "read the Bible and write the word '*commandment*' in a rough way." This was but a very rough education; and in order to give himself a little more polishing, he went to an evening school for a short time during his stay in Paisley. He had a most grateful remembrance of his evening school and of the worthy man who taught it, and the many ingenious expedients he fell upon in order to stimulate his scholars, many of whom were in their "teens,"

whilst not a few were beyond that. They had music and short lectures on astronomy, illustrated by an immovable diagram of the solar system, painted in bright colours on the ceiling, and extending over the whole breadth of it, with blazing comets rushing out from the corners, and threatening to come into fearful collision with one another. And then they had weekly competitions in spelling, which produced a rivalry as keen as many an electioneering contest ever did; for the prize, although consisting of a few quills or halfpenny pencils, or a sixpenny watch seal or key, or a fourpenny box of paints, was just as eagerly contested as any vacant seat in Parliament or any ancient Grecian game.

Stirling, however, did not profit much by his attendance at the evening school, on account of the late hours to which he was obliged to work, and the intemperate habits he had already acquired. It was unfortunate for the young apprentice that he did not become acquainted with William M'Gavin, author of the *Protestant*, who was at this time keeping an evening school in Paisley, and from whom Wilson, the distinguished ornithologist, derived no small advantage.

There was then quite a galaxy of talented young men in Paisley, who afterwards rose to considerable eminence, such as John Reid, a distinguished linguist, and amongst the first, if not the very first, to popularize several branches of scientific inquiry by his lectures and experiments, which he made accessible to the purse and the intellect of the

humblest artisan; his brother-in-law, William M'Gavin, whose monument now adorns the Necropolis of Glasgow; and Wilson and Tannahill, long household names in the west; and Picken, the author of the *Dominie's Legacy*, then a boy; and merry, rollicking Christopher North, a youngster too at that time, whose name has shed the brightest lustre over the fertile field of Paisley genius.

On a cold day of keen biting frost, in the first week of January, 1792, a large and decently-attired company of rustics were seen assembled in and around the cottage at Kirkland. Death had entered that dwelling on the hill-side, and Jean Drysdale was a widow.

Both she and her husband were much respected, and all her immediate neighbours, and many of the parishioners, now turned out to show their regard for the living and their respect for the dead. What with his low wages and his drinking habits, Stirling had never greater difficulty in getting clothes than those which he wore at his father's funeral. His own words present at once the evils of drinking and the struggles of the poor, many of which arise from that, when he says, "My two grown-up sisters, who were at service, *got all the expense connected with the funeral to pay.*" These few words speak volumes as to the impoverishing, mean, and degrading nature of drinking habits. It was in this case just as it is in many others; the sober and the well-doing have to pay for those who have exhausted their means in the public-house.

The expense connected with funerals, some sixty or

seventy years ago, was a very serious matter to a poor family. Stirling has remarked that "no one got drunk at his father's funeral, but there was more than enough of drinking." At that period funerals, in many parts of the country, were occasions of hilarious feasting and uproarious wassail, and no one could more graphically describe these than Stirling himself. His descriptions would seem altogether overdrawn, were it not that they have been fully borne out by the testimony of others. We give a few specimens, partly from the speeches of the old lecturer and the statements of eye-witnesses:—

"From the time the corpse was dressed till it was laid in the grave, and oftentimes for days after that, drinking never ceased. The grief by that time must have got very 'maudlin.' The customs of those days imperatively demanded four or five rounds of whisky, and sometimes even more than this, with bread and cheese and other eatables in proportion, even from the widow and the fatherless in our peasant homes. A funeral procession was frequently a very muddled, straggling, and staggering affair. The hearse would sometimes leave the company altogether, the horses setting off at a gallop, with the driver dead drunk on the box. On one occasion, when this was the case, the coffin was pitched from the hearse going down a hill at full speed, and such was the *bleared* condition of the funeral party, that not one of them knew that such a catastrophe had happened; and when they arrived at the churchyard they found the hearse *minus* its burden, but no one could

tell where it was. It was only a part of the procession, however, that arrived at their destination; for a boy, now a very old man, who happened to be on the road at the time, has told us, in sportsman's phrase, that he found several lying here and there '*winged*' on the road-side.

"The dying injunction of a Highland sergeant was, that every one who attended his funeral was to be sure to get drunk before reaching a certain stream half-way to the churchyard. It is needless to add that the injunction was most faithfully carried out. The closing orgies were such, however, that even the sergeant, with all his martial character and love of whisky, could not have anticipated. The party quarrelled before reaching the grave, but on entering the burial-ground the quarrel rose to its height. Clanship, and family pride, and rivalry added fuel to the flames which whisky had kindled, and some of the bones of a former occupant, that lay scattered about the grave's mouth, were used as weapons in the bloody fray. In a certain part of the North Highlands there was a famous stone up to a very recent period, called the M'Leod's Stone, as the only men in that quarter who could move it were a few who bore that name. This stone was a great eyesore to the M'Kenzies, none of whom could budge it a single hair's-breadth. All funeral parties rested at this stone, when the short kegs of whisky were again produced. If any of the M'Kenzies were present, the M'Leods moved the stone, and of course there was a quarrel. A funeral party drew up here as usual, some years ago, but it was found that this

stone of contention was broken to pieces. An old shrewd blacksmith, one of the M'Kenzies, dreading a renewal of hostilities, applied his forehammer to it on the night before the funeral. In the Highlands it was no uncommon thing at a burial to have several rounds in or about the house before starting, several on the road, when the burying-ground was at a distance, another pull at the bottle in the churchyard, and a few more applications on returning to the house. When an innovation was at last made upon these unseemly practices, by a proposal to diminish the number of rounds at funerals, an old Highlandman, who had not only been accustomed to hard drinking on such occasions, but also to the bagpipes, left in high dudgeon, muttering, 'They may bury the deid that like, or the deid may bury their nainsell; but I'll hae naething tae dae wi' a cauld dry burial.'"

When it is borne in mind that funerals were thus frequently occasions of shameful excess, there is little wonder that Stirling should note the pleasing fact in his memoranda, that "none got drunk at my father's burial," even although "there was more than enough of drinking." Happily there is now a great improvement in this respect; and this is one point at least in which all will admit that "the former times were not better than these," and that the temperance reformation, by diminishing, and in many cases abolishing, drinking altogether at funerals, has effected great good. If drinking is unseemly anywhere, it is surely amid the solemnities of a funeral, where it is not only a serious item

of expense to many poor families, but altogether out of place amongst the last rites which affection and respect at such a solemn time lead us to pay to the living and the dead.

When Stirling laid his father's head in the grave, in the quiet churchyard of Strathblane, the feelings of his better nature were awakened, and he resolved that he would give up all his drinking habits, and begin a new life. With this resolution he returned to Paisley. His mother having placed her two youngest daughters out at service, followed shortly after, took a house for herself and her son James, and with her characteristic love of independence commenced washing and dressing, and kept two or three lodgers. This continued for about a year, and a happy time it was for Stirling; for he flattered himself that he had for ever got rid of his drinking habits and companions.

His mother's health, however, failed, and she was obliged to leave Paisley and go and reside with a daughter at Milngavie, in the neighbourhood of Strathblane. This was a sad change for her son. For a year he had got his work from the shop to do at home, in company with his widowed mother. He was thus freed from the contaminating influences of the garret and his drunken shopmates, and could devote all his spare time to reading and self-improvement. He took pleasure in reading aloud to his mother at night after the day's work was over; and on Sabbaths he went regularly to church.

When his mother left he "had no shift," as he says, "but

to break up the house and go into some shop to work again." He sought a new master and a new shop, thinking that he might meet with more sober workmen. In this he was disappointed; the new shop was as bad as the other, if not worse. "The old plague seized me once more," he says, referring to his drinking habits. He was determined, however, not to yield without a struggle. He went to Greenock, under the impression that a new place might bring a new mode of life. But matters were as bad here; and speaking of this he says—

"I got work in a factory, but the old adage was but too true, 'Out of the frying-pan into the fire.' I went to Greenock in hopes of better company, but I had no sooner commenced work than my 'block' was demanded, which, as a matter of course, I had to pay; for the tyranny of custom was such that there was no escaping of this. I paid my 'block,' and every one of the workmen added a small sum to this, but it became a large sum when the time lost was taken into account. We were busy drinking my 'block' when my old master from Paisley came in, and said he would pay all charges if I would go back with him. Seeing that I could expect no better companions or customs, I agreed to return."

Another dark page follows in the life of the young shoemaker. All his good resolutions were thrown to the winds, and he entered, though not without "terrible remorse and horror at times," into all the dissipation and low sports of his drunken shopmates, such as dog-fighting, playing cards,

and throwing bullets on the more retired roads leading from the town. His reading and church-going habits were again given up, and he went on drinking, the one day in the "horrors," the next, sinning and repenting, and resolving, and yet at the back of every new resolve saying, "*I will seek it yet again.*" His mother, fearing the worst, and anxious for his safety, earnestly requested him to come to Milngavie. His master was loath to part with him, but was at last persuaded to do so, and agreed to send him work.

Stirling left with bright hopes, and a firm determination to drink no more. But he did not know himself as yet, or he would have been less sanguine. The master who sent him work from Paisley failed in business shortly after this, and both he and his father, who were in company, and who were both given to drinking, as a last resource entered into the army, went abroad, and fell on a foreign field.

CHAPTER IV.

DARK DAYS.

NE dark page follows another in the history of intemperance. Stirling's mother had let her room to an excise officer and his wife. Watching others, poor fellow, he could not watch himself. He might seal the "stell's mouth," but he could not seal his own against its deadly contents. According to all accounts he deserved no better fate than the exciseman who, in the well-known ditty of the poet, himself a gauger, was "danced awa'" in grips that were neither the most fascinating nor the most gentle. This officer of the crown offered Stirling a letter of credit to get leather from an acquaintance of his in Glasgow. The offer was accepted, and the journeyman shoemaker now became his own master. The exciseman did all he could to get him customers, and also compelled them to be very prompt in their payments, till he had the price of the leather, for which he became security, in his own hands. Having got the money, he assured Stirling that he had paid the Glasgow merchant, and in a few weeks after this he was called away to another part of the country. The money, however, had gone to the publican's till; for in about four months the inexperienced young master got the whole account to pay,

on which he remarks, "It was all over now with my '*corking*.'" Such is life, at least the drinking part of it. How true what Burns says—

"Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,
And muckle they may grieve ye."

After this unfortunate speculation he got work from a respectable master in Milngavie, who seems to have been blessed with "a merry heart," especially when he took a glass, which was sometimes the case. On such occasions he would sing old Scotch ballads, such as "Sir James the Ross," "Chevy Chase," and one about "Malcolm Canmore," in which there occurred the lines, which he gave with great emphasis and spirit—

"The King sat in Dumfermline toon,
Drinking the bluid red wine."

He seemed to have all the old Scottish minstrelsy by heart, and he would tell stories of Border raids, and intersperse them with snatches of the "Gentle Shepherd," or church music, for hours together. He held his journeyman in high esteem, and always had him with him at such times. His motto was, "Drink, but don't go over the score;" a very hazardous experiment, and one which the journeyman, like many others of his temperament, could not carry out. Stirling, therefore, before he was out of his "teens," became the moving spirit, or, to use his own words, the "cock of the walk," at all festive occasions, such as fairs, "bookings,"

“bottlings,” weddings, “apron washings,” and printers’ balls, to which he was always invited, and where his songs, his stories, and his broad humour ever made him a welcome guest and the “chief o’ the core.” A “*booking*” was the name given to that somewhat select meeting of friends which took place on the night when the names of bride and bridegroom were entered in the books of the session-clerk of the parish with a view to proclamation for marriage on the following Sabbath. The “bottling,” as it was called, was a meeting of a more miscellaneous character, and therefore more uproarious, held some night shortly after the first day’s proclamation of the “banns.” There was, of course, drinking here again till a late, or rather an early hour, and all who were present on such occasions were expected to give some present or another to the couple who were about to be married. Such meetings were frequently seasons of broad farce, rough and ready humour, and no one contributed more to this than young Stirling. An “apron washing” was the festivity which took place when a lad had finished the term of his apprenticeship and become a journeyman. His apprentice apron was washed, so that it might carry no marks of former inferiority into the higher region of journeyman craft. At such a washing there was of course more whisky used than water. Drinking was thus associated with every possible change in life. The calico printers at Milngavie and elsewhere throughout the country had their balls, and such a tide of roaring, reckless dissipation could scarcely fail in producing unspeakable mischief. The bright

hopes of youth were scorched with liquid fire, and the "gowden days" of youthful affection, the happiest period in the brief span of mortal life, were soaked in Scotch drink. A man in Stirling's young days might go to a much greater excess in drinking than now without being brought within the pale of drunkenness. We refer again to his notes:—

"I was counted a sober, decent lad, although I would drink and dance whole nights at the printers' balls, to which I was always invited; and although we had only a smithy for our ball-room, we would dance around the anvils till daylight put our lasses to the blush, so that they would stop no longer."

What could be the harvest from such a seed-time? And yet the moving spirit in all this wild frolic was "counted a sober, decent lad!" Sixty years afterwards, when drinking came to be measured by a very different standard, he might well be astonished, as doubtless he was, at the reputation for sobriety which he enjoyed in early life.

About 1793 the French Revolution awakened an earnest spirit in the country for the reform of parliamentary abuses. An association was formed in London under the name of the "Friends of the People," and about the same time a similar association was formed in Glasgow under the title, "Friends of the Constitution and the People," or, as they were frequently styled, "*black nebs*." Stirling became a member of the Glasgow society, and threw his whole soul into the subject of reform. He took a deep interest in the trials that followed, of Muir and Palmer, Skirving, Gerald,

and others, for sedition; and being very warm and unguarded in his denunciations of Tory intolerance and of the judicial proceedings connected with these trials, he very narrowly escaped falling into the hands of hired spies, who were very numerous in Scotland at that time. There is little wonder that the fate of Muir and the other political martyrs excited very deep indignation on the part of many, when it may be said that they were prejudged and condemned before their trial. Lord Cockburn in his *Memoirs* has exposed the leanings of the bench at that time in what he says of that "formidable and dangerous judicial character," Lord Braxfield:—

"This appeared too often in ordinary cases; but all stains on his administration of the common business of his court disappear in the indelible iniquity of the political trials of 1793 and 1794. In these he was the Jeffreys of Scotland. He, as the head of the court, and the only very powerful man it contained, was the real director of its proceedings. The reports make his abuse of the judgment-seat bad enough; but his misconduct was not so fully disclosed in formal decisions and charges as it transpired in casual remarks and general manner. 'Let them bring me prisoners and I'll find them law' used to be openly stated as his suggestion when an intended political prosecution was marred by anticipated difficulties. If innocent of this atrocious sentiment he was scandalously ill-used by his friends, by whom I repeatedly heard it ascribed to him at the time, and who, instead of denying it, spoke of it as a thing

understood, and rather admired it as worthy of the man and of the times. Mr. Horner (the father of Francis), who was one of the jurors in Muir's case, told me that when he was passing, as was often done then, behind the bench to get into the box, Braxfield, who knew him, whispered—'Come awa, Maister Horner, come awa, and help us to hang ane o' thae d——d scoondrels.' The reporter of Gerald's case could not venture to make the prisoner say more than that 'Christianity was an innovation.' But the full truth is, that in stating this view he added that all great men had been reformers, 'even our Saviour himself.' 'Muckle he made o' that,' chuckled Braxfield in an under tone; 'he was hanget.'"

The liberal sentiments that are required to keep a man abreast of the tide of public opinion now-a-days would have sent him either to the gallows or to a penal settlement sixty years ago. The objects sought by the "Friends of the People" were praiseworthy and patriotic; but Stirling afterwards saw the inconsistency of seeking to reform the state without first reforming himself—a very important consideration to many who have vehemently clamoured for the "five points" in the midst of much domestic misery and social degradation, which have frequently been for the most part occasioned by neglect of the main point, personal reform. Upon this subject he very quaintly remarks:—

"I became one of the 'Friends of the People,' forgetting to be a friend to myself. I was all along a great reformer, according to my way of it, denouncing the heavy load of

taxes we had to pay, but taxing myself ten times more heavily than government did. I got a receipt from the government tax-taker, protecting me from imposition for a year, but when I paid my self-imposed tax at the licensed offices (the publicans), I got a discharge that made me impose upon myself. When a sixpenny *receipt* was got in one *office* it inclined me to get a shilling one in the next and a two-shilling one in the third I came to, till I was so loaded with *receipts*, I was forced against my will to throw away one half of them before getting home, and after all, the remaining half sometimes nearly taxed me in the dirt. Fine reforming indeed !”

Reforms that emanate from the public-house, and that are concocted over the “gill-stoup,” may benefit the publican, but they can never improve the social position of the working man, nor make his home happy. Self-culture, self-reliance, rational recreation, half-holidays and other spare hours turned to good account, will do more towards the attainment of this object than all the frothy vapouring of tap-room politicians and unprincipled demagogues, who have so often succeeded in making dupes of the people, and whose schemes not only end in smoke, but in something a great deal worse.

Stirling’s political fever was followed by one of a different sort, which probably saved him from a year or two’s imprisonment with hard labour, or from being sent to Botany Bay. Tent preachings were very common towards the close of the last century, although by that time they began to be rather on the wane, on account of the check which they

received from Burns' "Holy Fair." Whatever purpose may have been served by such gatherings, it is certain that whilst some were turning them to good account for their best interests, and whilst many a diversified scene and incident gave life and character to such assemblies, others, as the poet says, were "forming assignations to meet some day,"—and many a couple who afterwards got married, looked back upon such seasons as the turning-point in their lives, so far as matrimony was concerned. It was at a tent preaching on the "green brae" at Milngavie, near to the Old Relief Church, that Stirling first saw the young woman who afterwards became his wife. It was well that he did; for the fervour of his political feelings was at once turned in a new direction. He had made himself rather conspicuous by what was then thought to be seditious language, and he learned several years after this that he was not only suspected, but closely watched and reported in a quarter where the only mercy to be expected was to be put on board a tender which was kept lying off Greenock for the turbulent and the seditious of that time, especially for young men who threatened to be troublesome, and who, it was thought, could be easily cured of all such nonsense in the army or the navy. The meeting was therefore a happy one for Stirling, whatever may be thought of the circumstances in which he and Janet Buchanan met. Referring to this meeting he says, "I saw at first sight a native something in her quiet, retiring, modest face, that went direct to my heart, and told me that she was to be the guiding star of my life." And

truly, if ever woman deserved this name, she did, as the sequel will show. She was a "guiding star" to the poor inebriate during many a dark day. The family to which she belonged had but lately come from Doune, and Stirling's attachment for her had just begun to ripen into ardent and honourable affection, when circumstances compelled the family to remove to Elderslie. But a walk of fourteen miles or so was deemed nothing to the young shoemaker on a Saturday afternoon, when it brought him to the home of his love. Suffice to say that the family returned in a year or two, and the marriage was arranged to the satisfaction of all parties, Stirling once more resolving to "turn a new leaf." He began the married life well, as the following entry will show:—

"In the beginning of 1800 took a house, furnished it as well as I could, got married on the 5th of April, *set up family worship* at the beginning, and lived very happily."

Here is an example to every young married couple worthy of imitation. He owed much to the religious training of his mother, and to the scenes of devotion he had witnessed beneath the paternal roof. These were an impulse to duty in his sober moments, and a restraint upon him in the most reckless period of his drunken career. He proceeds:—

"Provisions, however, were then very high, and few families could afford to get shoes. My employer, with a heavy heart, told me that he had no more work. Having nothing to do at the shoes, and with a young wife now dependent

on me, I determined to take work wherever I could find it. I did not need to go far in search of this; for a master mason, who lived next door to me, offered to employ me as a labourer, so that when work at my block ceased I found plenty to do at the stone barrow. In the meantime a drunken precentor, out of Glasgow, came to the village to teach music. In those days I scarcely knew a precentor or a teacher of music who was not addicted to drinking. This caused singing to be looked down upon by the more sober portion of the community, for to be a singer and a '*wauf character*' were nearly synonymous terms. The singing master was a friend of one of the village publicans, and the class, of course, was held in his house. The teacher was as full of conceit as his old well-thumbed music-book was full of crotchets. Being fond of music, I attended along with many others, and once more my good resolutions went to the dogs. One favourite expression of this dissipated, itinerant teacher, in his opening address to his hopeful pupils, consisting of farm-servants, young masons, and printer lads, was, 'Music is the soul of harmony,' which was given with a great oratorical flourish; but he seemed to appreciate more highly another expression, which he frequently used, especially in his cups, 'Drinking is the soul of music.'

In almost every house some one might have been heard going over the gamut, and in the church on Sabbaths there was a strange medley of very "uncertain sounds," with sundry attempts at "new-fangled tunes," which were greatly displeasing to the old folks, particularly the "repeating ones,"

which they could not bear. These, and the singing of paraphrases, were almost regarded as mortal sins. Had a minister in some religious bodies at that time given out a paraphrase to be sung, or permitted the singing of a "repeating tune," it would have been a sufficient reason in the view of many of his hearers for bringing him before his presbytery.

Some time after this teacher left, Stirling was requested to open a singing class, which he did. This became another source of temptation to him, when music and drinking were so frequently associated. The mason lads in the parish, the cotton-spinners, printers, married men and single, young and old, flocked to the evening school, and "All this," says Stirling, "would have been a source of pleasure and improvement to me and to all who attended, had the teacher and his pupils not repaired too often to the public-house." By-and-by he was installed precentor in the Relief Church of the village, an office which he filled till he could say of many in that old place of worship, "I saw you brought to the bench in your mother's arms to be baptized, and now you are offering your own children for baptism; it's surely about time for me to retire." We cannot speak of Stirling in his official capacity as a leader of psalmody, but we feel certain from his fine appreciation of harmony between melody and sentiment, that he never would sing "Martyrs" or "Caroline" to the words of a triumphal sacred ode, or "Devizes" or "Triumph," as has been sometimes done, to the penitential wail of the fifty-first psalm. In his later years he rejoiced

in every movement for the improvement of our Scottish psalmody, and in every effort to elevate music to its appropriate position, and to redeem it from the degrading associations of drinking.

Times began to improve, and he was persuaded by his friends to start business for himself. He had lost in his former speculation with the exciseman, but he was now more careful. He remained steady for a time, and customers began to increase. Work came in upon him from all quarters of the parish and beyond it, and now was the time of which the poet speaks—

“There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.”

He took advantage of this “tide” for several years, during which he conducted himself with marked propriety; had several workmen in his employment; passed a large amount of money through his hands; was in comfortable circumstances for a man in his position; happy in the midst of his young family; respected in the village, where he was the most noted tradesman for breadth of information on a variety of topics, for energy, strong common sense, and shrewd mother wit. He had occasional “sprees,” but these were at long intervals, and were regarded at that time as something akin to an “amiable weakness.” To his honour be it said, he contributed not a little to the comfort of his aged mother. She was not permitted, however, to leave this world without deep grief at the “growing infirmities” of her son. She

was a member of the Old Relief congregation under the pastoral care of the Rev. Alex. M'Naughton, who still lives to adorn, with many Christian virtues, a sphere of labour which he has so honourably filled for nearly half a century.¹ He attended the widow on her death-bed more than forty years ago, and has still a pleasing recollection of those interviews, which were to her a source of much comfort, and to himself a useful school of experience in the early part of his ministry. The blessing of the dying widow came upon the young pastor, and in her simple piety he had another proof of the sustaining power of the Christian religion in the prospect of death. No son could be more attentive to a dying mother than James Stirling was. Notwithstanding all the infatuation of drinking, he would, during every lucid interval, read and pray by her bedside, from which, as he says, he always retired a better man. These exercises certainly seem incongruous with his drinking; but he was not then so bad as he afterwards became, and he is just another instance, amongst many, of how appetite and custom will overcome at times the tenderest affection, the strongest sense of duty, and the sternest resolve; and no man has any right to expect that the grace of God will do for him what he ought to do for himself. Alas! that he should ever have forgotten the words of his mother, as she took his hand into hers with a look such as a dying mother only can give to an erring son, and said in a faint whisper, "Oh, Jamie, be mair watchful over yourself, and God help you!"

¹ Since the issue of the first edition of this work, the Rev. Mr. M'Naughton has gone to his reward.



THE WIDOW'S DEATHBED.

These words, and the death that followed soon after, made a deep impression upon his mind, but what of that when the funeral itself, in the drinking customs with which it was associated, presented temptations to the very evil against which he was warned? But what was still worse, there was a tavern next door to his own home; and when orders for more work were given, or when accounts were to be paid, all this had to be done over whisky at the public-house. Money was thus spent and time was lost. Referring to this, he says, in his own quaint and graphic language:—

“As business increased, my visits to the public-house increased too, for it was then thought that no business could be transacted out of it. Wages had to be paid there, accounts settled, and orders for more work taken in. One house next door to me reaped much more advantage from my business than did my own family. The landlord told me one day that he had sold sixteen half-mutchkins on my account. But, notwithstanding, I always tried to keep in working order, although this was more at times than I could possibly manage. When I left the landlord’s house at night—for all my customers were his—he would clap me on the shoulder and whisper in my ear: ‘Come slipping in in the morning and I’ll give you a glass; you’ll be the better o’t.’ This practice of morning drinking was not yet begun by me, bad as I was, but it was soon learned, and not soon left off. The neighbouring farmers came into the village during winter to get their implements repaired, and half-a-dozen

of them would meet in a public-house and send for their tradesmen—the souter, the miller, the smith, the joiner—and then they would all fall to drinking. Stoup after stoup, and story after story, would go round till all who had entered the field of conflict had either fallen or fled. Being inflamed with drink and unfit for work, I would help some drunk farmer home, and sometimes an elder of the kirk, and, having done so, would return and raise a new whisky brigade of my own, and carry on the war as long as a shot remained in the locker. Though I was the greatest coward that ever entered the devil's battle-field at the onset, by the time that the third discharge of the drunkard's blunderbuss was over I was bold as a lion, wiser than Solomon, stronger than Samson, richer than Croesus, and more eloquent than Demosthenes! But ah! things were sadly changed when next morning dawned on my trembling frame—mute as a mummy, feeble as a child, stupid as a mule, my pockets empty as a cuckoo's nest in March, a coward in my own home and to my own conscience, afraid to look my wife or children in the face, so horror-smitten that when I commenced work among the men I would cry out—‘Oh, if hell be worse than this, what will an eternity of it be?’ I would resolve and pray to be kept from the temptation, but whisky, and the drinking customs, and my own appetite were too strong for my resolutions or my prayers at that time. It seemed as if I was to be borne down on the dark tide into hell itself.”

Fain would we pass over in utter silence a dark period of

some twenty years in the life of our old friend, and, for the sake of the dead as well as the living, we would gladly draw a veil over those sad years which were as the shadow of the "second death." It may be, however, that a few brief notices of that period may serve some good purpose, and, though now traced with reluctance and sorrow, may yet become, in not a few instances,

"Footprints, that perhaps another
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwreck'd brother,
Seeing, may take heart again."

If this shall be the case, or if these "footprints" of shame and suffering shall stand out and glow till they flash in the eye of any reader as so many beacon lights, this will be our best apology and reward for a dark chapter, which, after all, has its own light, and the results of which may be but another proof of how "light can be brought out of darkness, and good out of evil."

We are rather inclined to think that "Millguy" presented peculiar temptations to drinking some fifty years ago. Its comparative isolation, its prosperous public works, the influx of new inhabitants, its consequent transition state from rural to commercial life, the jovial character of some of the neighbouring farmers, who somehow contrived to meet pretty frequently at some one or other of the village inns, rendered it anything but a safe place to a man of Stirling's social disposition, and his power of "setting the table in a roar."

Many were the meetings, therefore, in the course of a week, at which

“The souter tauld his queerest stories,
The landlord’s laugh was ready chorus.”

As a necessary result, business came to be neglected, and the public-house had far more attractions than home. But for the prudent and unceasing exertions of his excellent wife, every vestige of business would have disappeared from his dwelling. By her good management she succeeded in procuring work for the journeymen, and by her kindly, cheerful ways, she managed to keep them at their daily tasks. In spite of all her efforts, however, business decreased, and it was with a sorrowful heart that she saw one workman after another compelled to quit the house, and go elsewhere for work.

She bore up with the strong love and the enduring patience of a true woman’s heart. But there was more than this—aye, there was more than this, or she never could have borne what she did. She knew and loved her Bible; and He who can speak a word in season to the weary was no stranger to her sorrow-stricken heart. It was sad for her to see the money that should have provided the necessities of life for her own family taken day after day and squandered in the public-house. Mothers alone who have been placed in the same circumstances can know the depth of her anguish, as, night after night, the gentle ministry of sleep came to her help, and soothed the cravings of her

hungry children crying for bread. And when they were hushed for a time beneath the angel wing of sleep how softly would she move about the house lest any footfall might awaken the sleepers and restore them to a consciousness of their misery. A mother's affection will devise many a little artifice to please her child; and often did she take her last handful of meal or flour at night and form it into some fantastic cake, shaped in such a way as could not fail to please the fancy, if it did not satisfy the appetite, of the child who first awoke in the morning. Little did the children know at that time the object of the small cakes so curiously shaped and so full of holes. But they knew that a deep grief lay heavily at their mother's heart, and the cause of that they knew but too well when they saw her often on her knees and bathed in tears, and heard her sobbing forth her earnest prayer, the burden of which seemed to be but one name, and that their "father." It was sad for her to see him gradually losing self-respect, and drinking at times for many weeks together, her children meanwhile ill-clad and ill-fed, whilst the publican's family could live on the fat of the land and appear in their flaunting silks and satins. Matters grew worse and worse, and many were the scalding tears which she shed, and the importunate prayers she offered, as the darkness deepened around her. What could the strong love of woman have done more than she did to arrest impending ruin? She bore all with a meek and forgiving spirit. At times she would plead and remonstrate as only the strong love of

woman can do, but never did she upbraid—never did she utter a word that might have led to fatal consequences in a moment of drunken frenzy. In her deepest sufferings, and in her darkest hour of anguish, aye, even when the demon drink—for we will not say her husband—had smitten her to the dust, the law of kindness was on her lips, and hers was the priceless ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. She suffered apart—in quietness and solitude, like the stricken deer. There are many who yet remember that meek, pale face, which spoke of a wasting sorrow within—her plain clean white cap, and her head bound with a napkin, for she was seldom free from severe headaches; and how could it be otherwise, when her life was little else than a living death, when her heart was every day nigh to breaking, and when a sensitive nature like hers had to bear the daily burden of a drunkard's wife? She dwelt much apart from her neighbours. They saw her troubles, and deeply felt for her, but her retiring ways made her grief one with which a stranger sought not to intermeddle. As the darkness deepened, her spirit retired within itself, and sought light and strength from God. Nature is soothing and kindly to the distressed; and often did this suffering wife and mother repair to that sequestered glen, formed by the precipitous banks of the Allander, in the neighbourhood of her own dwelling. The calmness of this retreat, the murmuring stream, the green foliage, the song of birds, the wild flowers, seemed to her troubled soul like so many kindly voices, and not seldom in their midst did she find relief in prayer and in tears. When

her husband was a herd-boy at the Kirk House, he tells us that when he saw his mistress sitting on a grave-stone and weeping in the kirk-yard, he thought she was weeping for the dead buried there, but he soon learned that she was weeping for the living in her own house; and now, after the lapse of forty years, his own poor broken-hearted wife sits in her own home, or wanders by the banks of the Allander, weeping for him. Oh, Drink! what sorrows are equal to those which thou hast inflicted upon the tender heart of woman! Figures may compute the amount of poverty, and crime, and taxation, which are thy products, but there is a sacred domain beyond this into which figures cannot enter, an amount of suffering which they can never compute; for what statician will venture to embody in figures the mental agony of blighted hopes and broken hearts, or grasp by any power of arithmetic the hourly wasting grief of the drunkard's wife!

But still the darkness deepens, and new evils are yet to be encountered. Unearthly and horrid sights meet the drunkard's vision. Every nerve is unstrung, and the poor shattered frame is all on fire. He is in the incipient stage of a dreadful malady, and he cannot rest. He mutters ominous threats—

—“glad to be hurled
Anywhere, anywhere out of the world.”

He starts on a Sabbath-day for Glasgow, and will not be restrained. He takes the road over the lonely moor, the

haggard picture of despair. And who follows him, and never loses sight of him for a moment, although he is hurrying on like a frenzied demon? His own faithful wife. And what a day of agony that was to her! Alas! but the sad precursor of many such days yet to come. Glasgow at last is reached; friends there are alarmed; those of them who are at church are immediately sent for; every healing measure is adopted to quiet and soothe. Rest and reason at last return. A lucid interval follows. The resolution is formed never to drink again, and the poor wife once more hopes against hope.

But "the morning cloud and the early dew" soon pass away, and so was it with the drunkard's resolve. Nor need we wonder at this, when, as yet, there was no one to keep him in countenance with the friendly example of abstinence. It was the very reverse of this. All the drinking customs of society at that time were at war with the poor drunkard, and their object seemed to be to hunt him to death. It never was for a moment imagined that he could be made any better, or that any one was at all implicated in his sad condition.

Fifteen years before the temperance movement was heard of in any part of the world, Stirling tells us that he had often formed the resolution, especially after a "ramble," to stand up in the precentor's bench in the presence of the whole congregation, when the minister had pronounced the blessing, and say—"Christian brethren, seeing that many of us are greatly injured by the prevailing custom of doing all our business over intoxicating drink in the public-house, if

four or five of you will agree with me to unite together, under a promise that we will not use it on any occasion, perhaps more will join with us in an endeavour to put this great evil down." Had our old friend uttered these words in public he might have saved himself and others many years of sorrow, and he certainly would have been the father of the temperance reformation. The whole idea of the movement lay in that early resolution; and if he was not the first to carry it out into practical effect, the great idea of the world's emancipation from the slavery of drinking, and the means by which this was to be accomplished, were familiar to his mind long before the movement began in America. He tells us, however, that he had not the courage to stand up in the bench and utter these words. Business still continued to be transacted at the public-house, and many an anxious wife had still to experience that "hope deferred which maketh the heart sick," and one mother at least had to resort again and again to the expedient of making little fancy cakes out of very scanty materials, to blunt the keen edge of hunger, when her children should awaken from the sleep that had kindly come to her aid. It was sad for her to see her husband become wholly unable, from the restless craving of appetite, to sit even for a few hours together at his work. In his shirt-sleeves, bare-headed, and without neckcloth, he would keep oscillating between his stall and the street, till he met with some "drouthy crony" who would stand treat for a dram; or, failing this, he would beat about from door to door till he could borrow a sixpence, so that he might

have the means of adding fuel to the consuming spark within. When "Millguy" would neither yield a penny nor a dram, and when mean-spirited publicans gave him the cold shoulder, and he could no longer meet them with a sixpence, he would walk to Strathblane or to Campsie, in the dress which we have described, where he scarcely ever failed in "raising the wind." Three or four pounds' worth of boots and shoes would sometimes go to a public-house, but the money which should have paid for these, and which should have been taken home to provide for his own family had all been drunk before. And after all, when the publicans had fleeced him, they were the first to turn him to the door. Their tender mercies are at any time cruel, and he bitterly felt this when he appeared before them empty-handed, and when even his meanest shift could not bring "grist to their mill."

Many sad details in his drinking career must be passed over in silence. We will not recall scenes that must be painful to the living. Oh, surely drink is seen in its most accursed form when children have to rush in and stay a father's uplifted hand from a deed of violence such as we blush to name, or when they have to bind him for the sake of himself and others, like the demoniac who lived amongst the tombs. Who would not rather look at that man when he was clothed and seated, and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus, than see him tearing his fetters in pieces, and cutting himself with stones? For the same reason we hurry over many wasted years of burning shame in the

drunkard's life, that we may reach another period which, as a sunny, green spot, an "Isle of Beauty," peace, and freedom, stand out from all the rest. Omitting, therefore, many sorrowful revelations which furnish a fearful reply to the inquiries, "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause?" we select but a very few more details from the heap of misery now lying before us.

Returning from Glasgow one dark, stormy night, after he had been drinking for several weeks, and when he was again in that state of mind and body most accessible to horrible fancies, he had reached a lonely part of the road on his way home, when all at once he might have said with the poet,

"I there wi' something did forgather,
That put me in an eerie swither."

This mysterious personage did not appear to his accusing conscience and troubled imagination to be Death, but the Prince of Darkness, and an awful conflict now ensued, which left him bleeding and bruised in his desperate efforts to escape. His sad plight, and the terror of his poor wife when he reached home, may be more easily conceived than described. His hands and face and clothes bore unmistakable evidence that he had had a severe struggle in a hedge of holly, through which he had fallen, only to meet with worse enemies in the shape of long, trailing brambles, and thick-set whins!

Staggering through the streets of Glasgow at another time, he came to the "Ram's Horn Kirk," which was then building. He felt as if he were pursued by some invisible enemy (for drink will conjure up many fancies), and he sought shelter amongst the large stones that lay scattered about. Here he fell asleep, when he was but thinly clad, on a day of intense cold in January. Happily, he was discovered by some kindly workmen, who awakened him just when they were closing for the day, or this might have been his last sleep on earth. There is an eye that never slumbers nor sleeps!

On another occasion he had been drinking every day without exception for a month. When he did leave off and began to reflect, his mind was filled with the blackest horrors. He seemed to be all on fire, "a mass of spontaneous combustion," to use his own expression when describing his feelings at that time. His business fast going to ruin, the necessities of his family long neglected, filled him with distracting thoughts. In addition to all this, his burning thirst, the raging appetite for drink, seemed to render resistance to the bottle all but impossible. In this state of mind and body he went to a gentleman's house about a mile from the village, for the payment of a small account. He received the money, and was returning home, when the craving for drink was increased with tenfold force, and he seemed to be lifted off his feet and driven by an irresistible power to the public-house. Might he not just take one glass? No! no! He resisted with desperate energy

on the dark and lonely road till his very jaws seemed to crack; his tongue became like a piece of charcoal—he was dragged in the grasp of some hideous monster to what appeared to his distorted imagination the very mouth of that pit “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,” and the suffocating flames were dashed from every side in his face. He sunk to the earth, the big drops of sweat starting from his throbbing temples. He cried to God for help

“Like a strong swimmer in his agony.”

That very cry for help gave new strength to his shattered frame, and when he looked up he heard the moaning of the frosty wind, the murmuring of the Allander, and saw the stars shining far away on the dark forehead of the night. When he returned home his own wife was afraid for a time to ask what had happened, his agitation was so extreme. The recollection of that dreadful night kept him sober for several months.

Let no one imagine that all this could be endured by a man of Stirling's intellect and keen sensibilities without the deepest remorse. In his sober moments his agony was extreme. At the Radical time it was deemed necessary to swear in some special constables at “Millguy” for the protection of property. Our old friend appeared, along with some others, before a well-known justice of the peace. He was to be sworn in, but he refused to swear, on the ground that he had an “*infirmary*.” The justice, supposing that he

referred to some physical defect, after some scrutiny said that he could see nothing to prevent him from taking the oath and doing his duty as a man and a citizen. "But I have a sad *infirmity*," said the conscience-smitten inebriate, referring to his drinking habits, "I have a sad *infirmity*, and when I am under it I cannot act as a citizen, and much less as a man." The justice was struck with the reply, and set him down at the time as no ordinary man, an opinion which closer intimacy only served to confirm, and more especially when years after this the same official heard him deliver a lecture at a mechanics' institute, and dubbed him by a well-merited degree upon the spot—"The scientific cobbler." His remorse, we have said, was extreme in his sober moments, for he was a man of keen feelings and strong affections, and had a high sense of honour. At such times there was no counsel that he valued so highly as that of his faithful minister, who often pled and prayed with him. He was an object of deep solicitude and earnest prayer to his pastor, who was obliged more than once, in the exercise of discipline, to suspend him from the fellowship of the church. At such times he was truly a "bruised reed," or, to use the language of the psalmist, "a broken vessel." And yet, after all, he seemed as if he were destined to take his drinking habits with him to the grave. There was no blue sky seen through any rent cloud that held out the promise of a brighter future.

"At times," he says, "I would abstain for eight or ten months, but again the drinking customs would draw me into

the vortex, when another sad blank would take place in my rational existence."

The darkest hour, however, is that before the dawn. One day he was sent for to a public-house in the morning, and remained drinking there till the evening. He had been oscillating between this house and his work for several days before, as was his usual practice when the drinking fit was on him—unshaved, poorly clad, and without a penny. His will seemed entirely in the grasp of a master vice that had all but made complete wreck of conscience, honour, and affection. To all appearance he was drifting hopelessly onward to ruin that now "had him in the wind." But help, remonstrance, resistless appeal, conviction, were now at hand, and God employed the simple but startling question of a little child to arrest the drunken father in his downward career.

His faithful wife had always been in the habit of observing family worship with the children when he was absent. She sat down with a heavy heart and with tears in her eyes that night to this exercise which had so often been her solace. Looking to the younger children, she said: "Poor things, my heart is sore for you and your father." What follows is so affecting that our old friend must tell it himself:—

"I had been all day in the public-house, and at night, when I came home, my wife, as usual, was reading a chapter to the children. When she was so engaged I went in slipping like a condemned criminal. The portion of Scripture

read was the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, in which these words occur:—'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.' Our youngest boy, then about four years old, was lying with his head on his mother's lap, and just when she had read those awful words he looked up earnestly in her face, and asked: 'Will father be a goat then, mother?' This was too strong to be resisted. The earnest innocent look of the child, the bewilderment of the poor mother, and above all, the question itself, smote me to the heart's core. I spent a sleepless, awfully miserable night, wishing rather to die than live such a life. I was ashamed to go to church on the following Sabbath. I stopped at home and read the 'Six Sermons on Intemperance,' by Beecher, which had found their way into the house, but how I never knew. But so it was, that when looking about the house for some suitable book to read on Sabbath, I laid my hands on them, and they seemed as if written and printed and sent there for me alone. I was now decided. My resolution was taken, as it had never been before. All the men on earth could not tempt me to drink, clear or brown, thick or thin."

This affecting incident was, by the blessing of God, the turning-point in the poor inebriate's life. God has many avenues through which He can reach the heart of man, and



THE TURNING POINT.

out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He can ordain strength, and still the enemy and the avenger.

Stirling says that he never knew how Beecher's sermons were brought into the house. They were left three months before by his faithful minister, who was ever watchful for an opportunity of reaching his conscience and his heart; and whose prayers were at last answered, and his labours of love rewarded, in saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins. On that memorable Sabbath, when the drunkard was ashamed to appear in the house of God, his truly noble wife, ever watchful over him, saw that a precious opportunity had come, and, with earnest prayer to the Almighty, and with feelings trembling between hope and despair, she laid the six memorable sermons in a place where he could not but find them, and quietly left results with Him who turns the darkness into light and the night of weeping into a morning without clouds.

CHAPTER V.

THE DAWN.

HE TEMPERANCE REFORMATION begun in 1826 by the Rev. Dr. Beecher, the venerable father of the highly gifted authoress of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, made rapid progress in the New World. The movement soon spread to this country, and ere long created a very deep and general interest. But a short time previous to the affecting incident recorded at the close of the last chapter, societies had been formed in Glasgow and elsewhere. These appeared to many despairing hearts as the first faint streaks of a brighter day. Stirling had now got hold of a new idea, or rather a new principle, which awaked all the better feelings of his nature. The simple and affecting question of his little boy, the perusal of Beecher's six sermons, the reports he had been occasionally hearing of the temperance movement, prepared him, with a determination and a dependence upon the help of God which he had never before experienced, to take a stand upon new ground, from which he looked back upon his past life, and saw it, so far as rational existence was concerned, all but an utter blank. Early on the Monday morning after that memorable Sabbath when he felt ashamed to go to church, and which he spent

at home in reading his Bible and Beecher's sermons, he called at the manse, where many downcast spirits have been revived, and freely, and with deep emotion, unbosomed himself to his minister, who has often proved a "son of consolation," who "could have compassion on the ignorant and on those who are out of the way." He directed the deeply humbled penitent to the mercy of Him who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, and who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Amongst other important matters spoken of that morning was the temperance movement, which was then beginning to excite much interest in several places in the west of Scotland. That interview at the manse led to the formation of a temperance society at "Millguy" in the spring of 1830. A meeting was called, greatly to the astonishment of all the old wiseacres about the village. The minister, ever anxious to promote the temporal and eternal well-being of his fellow-men, came manfully forward and took the chair, and at the close of the meeting was the first to enroll his name as a member of the new society. In the original list of names now lying before us the third name on that list, written in good round ploughman style, is that of James Stirling. As soon as he had publicly enrolled his name, one of his sons, then a boy, who was present, ran home as fast as a pair of the nimblest feet in the village could carry him to tell his mother, who was lying unwell, the glad news. "Mother! mother!" he cried out in eager haste as the door flew open and he rushed to the bedside, "father has put down his

name, and the minister has put down his, and they're all putting down their names!"

"Thank God!" ejaculated the broken-hearted wife, who had passed through a long night of weeping, and on whom light was now breaking at last; "Thank God!" But she could say no more till she found relief in tears. And such tears! It was the first time in her married life that tears had started from the long-sealed fount of joy. "Thank God!" she said, after a pause. "If he has signed it, he'll keep it. Yes, he'll keep it," she added, with still greater emphasis, and her pale face was flushed as it had not been for many years, with the pride of early love. "Thank God! he has signed it, and I'll sign it too, and ye must all sign it, for, oh, surely the time, the set time, to favour us, and mony puir families, has come at last!"

What joy was in that dwelling that night as the father returned from the meeting with the strength of a new resolve and the light of a new hope beaming in his face. That night was as life from the dead to that family as they gathered around the fireside to offer up the evening prayer. There were voices tremulous with deep emotion in that little circle as the opening verses of the 116th psalm were sung to one of the old melodies of the heart, that formed an appropriate symphony for the words—

"I love the Lord, because my voice
And prayers he did hear;
I, while I live, will call on him,
Who bow'd to me his ear.

Of death the cords and sorrows did
About me compass round;
The pains of hell took hold on me,
I grief and trouble found."

The usual number of verses was sung, but a mutual sympathy drew them on to sing more. It was a pleasant song, and they seemed as if they would have sung it to the close, but the words—

"Thou didst my mourning eyes from tears,
My feet from falling free,"

touched a "responsive chord" in every heart, and the singing became a long-drawn sob, till all wept. It was truly affecting to hear the father attempt to read the parable of the prodigal son from the old seal-skin covered Bible which had belonged to his mother. It was too much for him. He got so far, till he was obliged to close the book and cast himself upon his knees at the throne of mercy, from which no true penitent has ever been driven. He "cried from the depths," and he was heard. The recording angel bore to heaven from that little circle the offering of at least one broken and contrite heart, and a victory was won that night which will never be forgotten throughout eternity.

The first temperance meeting in "Millguy" produced, as might have been expected, quite a sensation. Several notorious drinkers had signed the pledge, and the minister had put down his name along with them. This, of course, was the subject of endless sneering to not a few.

"It's the first time we knew our minister was a drinker!"

"Things are surely coming to a pretty pass when *he* needs to take the pledge with such like men!"

"Who would have thought it?"

"He had little credit at such a meeting, and in such company!"

These were some of the sayings that were freely bandied about, at what did really turn out to be more than an eight days' wonder. As for Stirling, every one predicted his failure, and that speedily. Many said he could never keep it; and others, who had a little more charity, and who seemed to pity him, said he would not get leave to keep it, for what was this and the other company to do without him? One publican engaged to *eat* all who would be found connected with the society in six months, including the minister himself! Poor man! the society still exists, but his business has long ago devoured him and several members of his family.

Every stratagem was tried to make Stirling break his resolution. The publicans, in particular, to whom he had paid his self-imposed taxes so long, would often send for him when some of his old "cronies" were drinking, and use all the means they could think of to induce him to join them. They never in one instance succeeded, and by and by they ceased to send for him, and at the same time ceased to employ him. We find the following entry in his notes:—

"On one occasion a distiller, from whom I got a good deal of work, but who had left me because I would not drink,

said that he would like much if I would begin again and take a 'drappie of his big cow's milk,' and that if I did so he would come back for all his shoes from me, as he had never been so well served since he left. My reply was—"I once heard a mason say that a man had just so many glasses of whisky to drink in his life, and the more he drank to-day he would have the less to drink to-morrow. Now, sir, if this be true, you should excuse me, for surely I have had my full share these forty years past. But though all the distillers and sellers of drunkards' drink in the land would give me employment, it would be a poor reward for a lost eternity. Experience has taught me that when the devil takes away one customer Providence sends two better in their room. Yea, though none should give me employment, He that feeds the young ravens will not starve old Stirling's birds."

"'Humph!' said the distiller, taking out his box, 'will ye tak' a snuff then?' and away he went, putting his spur into his horse with a vigour which showed he was in no happy mood of mind."

Many who had very generously predicted that Stirling "would soon be in the dirt again" (their own expression, and but too apt an illustration, we fear, of their own state of mind) were very assiduous in spreading reports that he had returned to his old habits. They had him drunk in every corner of the parish. Not one of these reports was true, neither did the subject of them care very much about them so long as everybody could see a very marked change for the better in the appearance of himself and family. This

change was the strongest practical argument against the pernicious trade of the publican, and at the same time the folly of the drunkard, who had wasted the best forty years of his life. The improvement was so great that it was a living refutation, and the best that could be given, of all such wicked slanders. By-and-by those who were disposed to act the part of the "priest and the Levite" of old, ceased to shake their heads and mutter ominous things when Stirling's name was mentioned. They began to see after all that he was a changed man. There was no better proof of this than the pale face of his wife, now radiant with smiles, whilst his home and every one in it assumed by degrees a sunny, cheerful "bienness" hitherto unknown. Customers increased, work flowed into the house, even although the distiller had galloped off in high dudgeon. The occupant of that humble stall was never seen as heretofore in wretched *dishabille* upon the street, like a restless, troubled spirit, one hour perhaps at his work, and then out upon the street again, penniless, half-clad, unshaved, and every nerve quivering for more drink.

Nobly did his excellent and heroic wife encourage him in the good cause he had begun. She joined the society herself, and did everything that the strong love of woman could do to keep her husband sober. He was right, therefore, when to those who felt delighted at the change which had taken place, he said, as he pointed to his wife, "My better half has the credit of it all." She had borne much, she had prayed earnestly, she had waited patiently, and her most sanguine

wishes were more than crowned with success. And now that her husband was a sober man she did everything she could to keep him so. The days on which he formerly went to Glasgow to purchase leather were, to her anxious spirit, days of trembling and distress. At first, after he had connected himself with the temperance movement, and when his fate as yet trembled in the balance, she went to Glasgow herself, and bought and brought home the leather, carrying it often all the way that he might not be exposed to the temptations of his former boon companions in the city. She was a truly noble woman in lowly life and in the midst of many trials. We had almost said regarding her, in the words of Solomon, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." In her darkest days she found her way to the sanctuary, and the children were all cleanly if they were but poorly clad. She had reason to thank God after many years' suffering for the blessed change which temperance brought to herself and her family, and words cannot express the gratitude she felt. She had now no need to resort to the expedient of baking overnight some little cake out of very scanty materials, and of putting "a hole and a string" through it in order that she might please for a time the fancy of some half-famished child in the morning. The means of supporting her own family, which had formerly gone to the till of the publican, were now put into her own hand, and the result was peace and plenty in her dwelling. Referring to this change, her husband says in his notes:—

"All things soon put on a new appearance—my wife,

my family, my trade, my countenance, my clothing. I saw all nature happy around me. My heart was happy within me—happy at having overcome my besetting sin—happy in the inward beaming sunshine of content. Those sights and scenes that delighted my youthful fancy became delightful again.”

When the first Martinmas came round he was able to lay in his winter's beef, a practice which was then common with all who could afford it, but he had not been able to do this for many years. A few months before this he had to borrow money to purchase the leather to make but one pair of bespoke shoes; but now he had a pretty good stock of leather on hand and owed no man anything. Before he renounced his drinking he was bent down as if he had been twenty years older than he really was. By-and-by he walked erect, his step became firm and elastic, and if ever youth was renewed his was at the advanced age of nearly threescore years. Better still, the inner life had undergone a change as marked as that which was now visibly stamped upon the outer. Referring to this change, one who was then resident in “Millguy” thus writes:—

“It has always occurred to me that it was about this time that a saving change began to be experienced by my old friend—and certainly a most marked change did take place in his spirit and conduct both in public, and, so far as I could learn, in the domestic circle. After the formation of the Temperance Society he began to rise immensely in character, and usefulness, and honour; and with the

exception of the spirit-dealers, was treated with wonderful deference by 'all classes'—the rich and the poor. He felt he was no longer the poor, self-degraded, and despised thing he was, a new impulse had been given to him; he seemed possessed of new life; and henceforth he devoted all the energies of his naturally vigorous and powerful mind to the promotion of everything that was good."

A change like this is surely one of the best arguments in behalf of the temperance movement. In the course of a few months a marked improvement took place in the village of "Millguy." The Saturday evenings passed off more quietly. There was more external decorum on Sabbath. Families got clothing that were but ill-clad before. More children were sent to school, and it was observed that they were cleaner and tidier in their appearance. The reason for all this is very clear when the statement of an excise officer residing in the village at that time is taken into account:—"Drinking for a few months after the Temperance Society was formed was diminished by one-fourth, latterly by one-third."

Notwithstanding all this marked and favourable change, there were still many bitter opponents to the movement in the village. The publicans and their friends could not look upon this change, and the rapid progress of the cause which produced it, without imitating in some degree the conduct of the "craftsmen of Ephesus." Temperance meetings had been held in the village subscription school. Could these not be prevented? Who has the power

of granting the school? Was the school built for temperance fanatics? And now ensued a village contest about the school and the meetings held in it. Happily the teacher at that time was not the man to submit to petty tyranny, and he succeeded in raising public indignation to such an extent that the publicans and their friends were glad to withdraw from the conflict. They withdrew, however, only to resume the fight in another quarter. Defeated in the school, they shifted the scene of action to the church, which had also been granted for temperance meetings. The minister was assailed on all hands with ominous croakers, who predicted the speedy up-breaking of the congregation, unless the temperance agitation were abandoned. According to them, "the church was on the very verge of ruin. The minister did not preach now to edification; his sermons were not what they once had been; he was mixing too much with low company in the temperance *concern*; the attendance was falling off; the seats were not nearly so well let since that movement had commenced; it had broken up all unity and brotherly feeling in the church." These and many other complaints went muttering about till it was resolved by the croakers to put a stop to temperance meetings being held any longer in the church. In this attempt they were again defeated, the people nobly standing shoulder to shoulder with their pastor, who had from the very first identified himself with the movement.

In addition to all this species of opposition, which was very common at the commencement of the temperance

movement, there were many "knowing ones" who fished up every passage of Scripture in which the term *wine* occurred, and where it seemed to be mentioned with approval, and chuckled over these passages with as much delight as if they had won a "glorious victory," to the infinite joy of the spirit-dealers. The marriage of Cana was a stronghold from which they thought they never could be dislodged, and from this imaginary fortress they kept pouring all manner of abuse upon the temperance fanatics, never for a moment dreaming that there is as little resemblance between the drugged wines of this country and the wine beverages of ancient Palestine as there is between dirty soap-suds and the crystal spring on the hill-side. All the "croakers" and the "knowing ones" found a formidable opponent in James Stirling. The arguments he wielded against them were like his own broad shoulders—strong and massive—and built upon facts that could not be overturned—himself being a living proof of the good that had been done.

He took a very active part in the political discussions that agitated the country previous to the passing of the Reform Bill, and after this measure became the law of the land he used every exertion to secure the return of a Liberal candidate for his native county. It was then that he specially attracted the notice of several county gentlemen of high standing and influence, who have still a very vivid recollection of the native pith and rich racy humour that characterized his speeches from the hustings, and the enthusiasm with which he never failed to inspire a meeting.

A gentleman who was present at one of these meetings thus writes:—

“I remember that at a numerously attended meeting in Milngavie, at which Alex. Dunlop, Esq., of Clober, I think, presided, our friend gave a speech of great power, filled with accurate and even profound views of political government, and containing some passages of intense pathos, which produced a startling effect upon the numerous auditory.”

He could not now plead the excuse which he had often done when urged to speak in public upon the subject of temperance, that he was altogether unfit for public speaking. On the 1st of January, 1831, he yielded at last to the entreaty of many friends, and addressed a large meeting in “Millguy.” And now commenced that work to which was devoted nearly the whole of his future life, with a purity of motive and a oneness of aim—with a self-denial, ardour, and perseverance worthy of so good a cause.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VETERAN WORKER.

“HE weak things of this world are made to confound the mighty.” History teems with illustrations of this. When John Bunyan, once the rough and the profane tinker, began to preach to his Bedford townsmen, and pour upon their consciences his burning words that rose from his heart as on wings of fire, the whole town turned out to hear him. Multitudes who came to hear the “tinker prate” found that God had given him a strong, athletic mind, a fancy teeming with rich and rare imagery, a lion heart, yet tender as a mother’s, and a tongue touched as with a “live coal.” Astonished crowds gathered around him, and his downright rough-and-ready logic, all glowing with his own earnest spirit, went direct to their hearts. So was it with James Stirling when he left his stall to do battle with a vice which had all but sunk him in the lowest hell. Rough and ready, strong-minded, and intensely earnest, with ample materials to draw upon from his own sad experience, never at a loss for familiar and striking illustrations, which stuck fast in the quivering flesh of the enemy like so many barbed arrows, he was just the man required at the time by the great bulk of the labouring classes in Scotland.

We have read somewhere, that when Dante walked the streets of Florence after he had published his "Inferno," people whispered as he passed, "That's the man who was in hell,"—and on hearing Stirling speak, no one could for a moment doubt that he had been in the hell of intemperance; his descriptions of it were so graphic, heart-rending, and true to the life, that it might have been said with equal propriety of him what was affirmed of the great Italian poet. His fame as a temperance orator soon spread, and invitations came pouring in from many places far and near for him to address meetings. The Rev. Dr. Hamilton of Strathblane, a warm friend of the temperance movement, had invited him on several occasions to address meetings in the parish church. Mr. Robert Kettle, whose name is a household word amongst temperance reformers, was the first to bring him before a Glasgow audience. An immense number gathered to hear him, for his antecedents were as well-known to hundreds in the city as at "Millguy." What a contrast he now presented compared with that Sabbath when he appeared in Glasgow under the influence of delirium tremens, or when he lay half clad exposed to a bitter January wind amongst the stones and rubbish at the Ram's Horn Kirk, when it was building! Several ladies who heard him on the occasion of his first visit to Glasgow as a temperance advocate, waited upon him next morning, and presented him with a neatly folded parcel, addressed to his wife.

"I came home," he says, "and gave it into her hands. She unfolded it, and looked at it with delight. When told

how it came, oh! how her loving heart heaved her breast, and tears of joy filled her eyes. For a time she could not speak; at length she said, 'Well, James, your tippling days often caused me to want what I needed, and what I often wished, but never, never did I expect to get such a beautiful present, and on your account. If ever a poor, sinful woman on earth got her prayers answered, I've got mine. When you used to be drinking I was praying that God would stir up some good men to unite together and try to put the evil down. Many are now engaged in the work, and, thank God, you among the rest. May He grant you a speedy victory!'

"About this time," he adds, "it was resolved by our committee to form a Mechanics' Institute, as an auxiliary to our society. The first lecture, on the following subject, was delivered by me:—'The pleasure and advantage arising from the knowledge of external nature.' It had the desired effect. A goodly number of all ranks joined the institution. Thirty lectures were delivered during the winter, and were well attended, and about £40 were collected for the purpose of commencing a library."

Stirling was now fairly on the field of useful labour, and invitations to address meetings from various parts of the country were so numerous, that he resolved to lay aside his leathern apron, and quit the "last," at which he had laboured for a period of fifty years. He might well have excused himself, on account of his advanced age, from taking any prominent part in the temperance reformation, but he had

experienced the good it had done himself and his family, and he nobly resolved to devote the remainder of his life to the advancement of this cause. Had he consulted his own comfort and ease he never would have taken such a step; for any one at all acquainted with the early history of this movement must be aware that any public lecturer who was really anxious to promote it had many hardships to encounter in travelling from place to place, and many privations and much opposition to endure. A few extracts from the brief jottings of our friend will give some idea of the multiplicity of his labours, and the difficulties he often met in the prosecution of these:—

“Lectured in the Bridge of Weir. Could procure no place to speak in but the open air. We had the stars for our lights, and the curses and shouts of several publicans for cheers. This was in 1838, and was the first out-door meeting I ever addressed on the same subject, and, I believe, the first ever held in Scotland in connection with any Society.”

* * * * *

“On New Year’s Day—addressed a meeting at noon, in the Trades’ Hall, Glasgow, along with the Rev. Mr. Roebuck and Mr. Robert Reid, after which Mr. Reid and I set off to Lanark to address a soiree that night. There was a great turn-out—the Rev. Mr. Borland in the chair. Next day I was desired to lecture to the mechanics at two o’clock in the Town Hall. At five o’clock of the same day went to Carstairs and lectured in the parish school to a large audience.

At seven o'clock got a pilot to steer me into Carnwath, three miles farther off, and lectured to a thin meeting. Got good accommodation (which at that time was seldom the case, beds oftentimes being damp), and was recruited not a little after my weary day's work. Next day, though the snow had fallen to the depth of nearly a foot during the night, I trudged on to Carluke, over nine miles of a dreary road which I had never travelled before. Held a meeting, after which the Rev. Mr. Nelson took me to his lodgings, and kindly gave me half of his bed. Came on to Wishawtown and addressed a meeting in the Rev. Mr. Brown's church, who hospitably entertained me. Next day started for home, being Saturday. Another fall of snow came on, blowing and drifting bitterly in my face. Had a hard struggle to reach Hamilton. Lost my way twice in the course of five miles, and arrived only to be too late to get a coach for Glasgow. Struggled on to Bothwell, where I found a chaise standing at an inn door, that had been at the castle with some gentry. The driver was resting the horses and refreshing himself. I went into the house and asked if the chaise was going to Glasgow. The driver replied that he would make the attempt in an hour. I was permitted to warm and dry myself at the kitchen fire. The landlady often looked very suspiciously at me, and at last said she was surprised that I did not need a dram on such a day, adding, with a toss of her head, 'but ye're may be ane o' the teetotal folks that have come in fashion noo-a-days, deil tak them!'

“With great struggling the noble horses, who were teetotalers also, brought us to Glasgow at six o'clock at night. After taking some refreshment in White's coffee-house I set out for 'Millguy,' plunging, to the knees oftentimes, through the snow for a distance of seven miles.

“Began again at Kilsyth, taking all the towns in the way through the counties of Fife and Forfar on to Montrose, when I took the steamer to Aberdeen. Here I laboured with great success for a week, and held meetings in some of the large churches, which were always crowded. A meeting was intimated to be held in a chapel in Woodside, on Monday night, when three of the Aberdeen committee accompanied me to the place. Only eighteen persons came into the chapel. After waiting some time in hopes of more coming I proposed to go out to the street. This was opposed by all as an innovation which could not be tolerated. However, after they were told what had been done by out-door meetings in the south and west, they all consented, and out we came. I got a chair from a woman, on which I mounted, with my back to the wall. Commenced by singing a hymn and prayer, at the close of which I opened my eyes upon an audience of five hundred. They all seemed very much surprised at what was going on. They kept in the best of order for an hour, till some carters, with their horses and waggons, came up and stopped to hear what was said. I was just then stating how many ministers in America had joined our ranks, and how few in Scotland had done so, when one of the carters gave a loud crack with his whip,

shouting at the same time, 'Ye should be a' weel whippit,' and then drove away.

"Held another meeting next morning (Sabbath) at eight o'clock. It had been intimated the previous night, and by seven o'clock 1000 persons had assembled. Several came to my lodgings to see if I was out of bed. A chair was got, and the large crowd listened with as much composure as if they had been in church. At noon addressed another large meeting; and in the evening met with at least 2000 in the open air. Left Aberdeen by the steamer for Inverness. Walked the deck all night with one of the passengers, who told me he was a manufacturer from Paisley, who had taken this trip unknown to any of his friends, in order to escape from the 'horrors' occasioned by drinking. He was in a very pitiable condition of mind, but of respectable appearance. As it was a fine night in August we spent the time in conversation, but I could learn nothing further than the mournful fact that he had become a victim to the drinking customs. I told him that it had been so with me also, and that I knew what the 'horrors' were as well as any living man, and could tenderly feel for him. At the same time I urged him to try the remedy which had emancipated myself and thousands more. We were just beginning to get deeply interested in each other when the vessel arrived at Inverness, and in the bustling of landing I missed him, and never saw him more.

"Got a hearty welcome to the Highland metropolis. After a night's rest set to work in calling upon ministers, magi-

strates, and others for their co-operation. At night had an excellent meeting in the Gaelic Mission church, next in the Gaelic Established church, then in the Independent chapel,—all crowded meetings. After a week's labour in this way it was agreed to send Mr. A. Fraser along with me to Dingwall, in Ross-shire, where we arrived after a walk of twelve miles. Procured the Town Hall, put round the drum, got lodgings, had a good meeting; at the close of which, when urging the people to come and join, an alarm of fire was raised outside, and all rushed out in great haste. The alarm having been given in Gaelic I could not understand what ailed the good folks at me. I thought they were offended. It was so far good, however, that there were so many active men assembled in one place; for though our meeting for that night was lost, the fire, through their activity, was soon got under. Another meeting was held, and, under the patronage of Sir Francis M'Kenzie, a good society was formed. At Forres could get no meeting, owing to Dr. Chalmers having got the start of me in the Church Extension movement. I left the Inverness society 400 stronger than I found it. Worked my way from Inverness to Aberdeen, addressing many meetings night after night. On arriving at Woodside, where I had agreed to address a meeting, I found the large church filled to overflowing. The minister of the church, who was in the chair, read the annual report, in which it was stated that they had 1243 members, and not a black sheep among them. After several in and out door meetings in Aberdeen a soiree

was held, Mr. G. Maitland in the chair, who, in the course of the proceedings, presented me with a beautiful Polyglot Bible as a token of esteem. My task being ended for a time in the north, I came by steamer to Arbroath, and from this, by Dundee, to Perth, where I met with Mr. Kettle, who was then on a visit to some of his relatives. He desired me, when I left Perth, to come by Kintillo, his native village, which I did, and spent a very happy day."

We find from these notes that he was frequently in Edinburgh, where he addressed large meetings, and was highly esteemed. The friends of the cause in the metropolis honoured him with a soiree. Several members of his family have still a vivid recollection of that morning when he set out for the city in company with his wife. She was reluctant to go at first, but he insisted that the meeting was far more an honour to her than it could possibly be to himself. "You can now," he said, "appear in Edinburgh with the best of them; and it's now high time that the world should see that I can clothe my wife as well as I have decked the wife of the publican for many long years." So the Glasgow shawl was brought out, and the last new gown (for it was now in her power to make a selection from several that had been bought since the change began); and when gown and shawl and tasteful bonnet were put on, there was at least one happy family in "Millguy" that morning. There were not a few heads at doors and windows as the happy couple, arm-in-arm, took their way to the coach for Glasgow, and we feel certain that there was not one envious

look, unless the landlady and the landlord of a certain public-house looked bitter things, as the one said to the other, "Ay! they're makin' a gude job o' their temperance! but let them gang—it'll no last lang."

Many of the neighbours knew what was in the wind that morning, and many from open doors and windows wished them a happy journey, if not so much in words, at least with glad smiles and significant looks. Off they went, and oh, what a happy change compared with that Sabbath when the one like a haunted spirit struck into the lonely road over the moor leading to Glasgow, and the other followed, trembling, watching, weeping behind!

When Edinburgh was reached, and Mrs. Stirling saw her husband so highly honoured, and so much deference paid to his opinion, and when in the evening, at a crowded meeting of well-dressed, intelligent people, she heard this minister and the other speak of the good her husband had accomplished, it may be safely said that she was the happiest little woman in the world.

The temperance movement was taken up at the outset with great spirit in Edinburgh. Large open-air meetings were held in various parts of the city. Stirling's favourite station was the Grassmarket, where he addressed large crowds, his platform being on one occasion an empty rum puncheon set on end.

About the close of 1838 Mr. Stirling met with a very serious accident, of which he has given the following account:—

“On the 6th of December Mr. Robert Reid and I were called to address a weekly meeting that was held in Spreull’s Court Chapel, Glasgow. After the meeting was over I was coming out alone, and the lamp above the door had gone out. Not recollecting that there was a short stair from the door down to the court, I stepped right out, and falling on the causeway, fractured my thigh-bone, which laid me up in dock for six months. During four months of the time I suffered great agony on account of the bone never uniting. By the month of May I was able to lay by the crutches and walk with the help of a staff, when I got out and at the work again, beginning at Glasgow, and working my way on to Arbroath. Here I met with another accident that might have proved fatal but for a kind Providence. On account of my lameness and the slipperiness of the rocks, when I was going on board the steamer, on her way to Aberdeen, I fell into the sea, but happily got out without any other damage than a thorough drenching. The day was warm, and my clothes were dry before I reached Aberdeen. I laboured for a week in the city. Proceeded to Banchory to be at the disposal of the Rev. Alexander Munro and Captain Ramsay of Banchory Lodge. Here I was employed for two weeks, holding meetings in six different places. Went next to Stonehaven, and walked in procession with the members of the society out to Dunottar Castle, a distance of two miles, and held a soiree on the parade ground on its summit. After returning, addressed a meeting in the square, surrounded by several thousands, and wound all up

by an address in the Methodist chapel. This was fully as much as my leg could bear, and by twelve o'clock at night I was glad to tumble into bed for three hours, having to catch the mail for Aberdeen at 4 A.M. But, alas! when the mail came up there was not a seat neither in nor out. I got a gig for eight miles, and struggled on other eight miles on foot. But I had no help for it, as I had to be that night at Ellon, sixteen miles further north. So after taking three hours' sleep at Aberdeen I started at 4 P.M. on the Peterhead coach, reached Ellon, and had a good meeting in the United Presbyterian church. I got the minister persuaded to preside. He was loath to do so, as he was afraid of a riot, as had recently been the case when Dr. Begg, from Edinburgh, had a Church Extension meeting in it. However, we got through in peace, and formed a society at the close. Went to Methlick, where I could neither get a church nor a school for a meeting, because the people took me for a Chartist. I took my station on the road beside the teacher's garden, and addressed about two hundred people. Out of that meeting sprang a society, having in it two members who are bright trophies. When I visited this place ten years afterwards, what a contrast did I behold! Formerly they were poor, despised drunkards. But the last time I saw them one of them had a good farm, and had got a splendid silver medal from the Agricultural Society for having his farm and garden in such beautiful order. The other, ten years ago, had not one shilling to rub upon another, but the last time I saw him he had twelve acres

of good land, with an excellent house upon it, four cows, and a horse and gig, in which he sent me on ten miles to Old Meldrum. The farmer's barn is provided with forms, and is now, when occasion requires, a teetotal hall, instead of the highway.

"After a tour of four months, in which I visited all the towns in the six counties of Aberdeen, Banff, Elgin, Nairn, Inverness, and Ross, I was sent to Fraserburgh for two weeks, during which I gave sixteen lectures in and around it. At the close of these meetings a soiree was held, when I was presented with a purse and five sovereigns in it. I returned to Aberdeen, and held meetings often twice a day for some time. I received a letter from Glasgow, stating that a missionary was wanted for the Cowcaddens district, and that Mr. Kettle had recommended me for this situation. I agreed to go, and proceeded westward, lecturing in as many places as I could overtake."

It was an interesting sight to see old "Father Stirling," as he was now called, wending his way from house to house in the lowest and most poverty-stricken parts of the district of Cowcaddens, where he acted for some time as a missionary, addressing public meetings three times weekly, and visiting six hours each day. Many families have still a grateful remembrance of those visits, and many who were reclaimed from habits of drinking, amongst whom were both parents and children, will have reason to bless God that ever they saw the aged missionary. In the few written jottings that he kept he sums up his labours in this place in a mere

sentence or two; but we have reason to believe that the good result of these efforts will be seen in the case of many families and individuals when eternity shall unfold the records of time. Had he kept an extended journal of his services, the laborious months that he spent in this populous district of Glasgow, where he met with drunkenness in its most appalling forms, and where he did much good, would have occupied a prominent place. Of his labour here he says—

“It was heart-sinking. Many, many were the shocking sights I witnessed as the fruits of drunkenness, sights that were even appalling to me, notwithstanding all I had experienced myself.”

It is pleasing to meet with so many incidental references in his notes to so generous a philanthropist as the late Mr. Robert Kettle, of whom it was really true that he

“Did good by stealth, and blushed to find it fame.”

The veteran missionary says,—

“But for the kindness of this good man I would have been frequently tempted to abandon the field in despair. But he invited me to breakfast once a week in his own house, and cheered me on with his kind and pleasant counsel.”

It was at the expense of the same benevolent merchant that our old friend was stationed for a time in the county of Perth, where he addressed many meetings, and did much good.

It is truly astonishing the amount of work Mr. Stirling

accomplished, the number of societies he formed, the lectures he delivered, and the extent of ground he went over in the course of a few years. Taking the map of Scotland and comparing it with his very brief but closely-written jottings, it will indeed be difficult to place one's finger upon any town or village, from north to south or from east to west, where the veteran reformer did not hold one or more meetings. Nothing has astonished us more in the whole of his career than the rapidity of his movements and the frequency of his meetings at his advanced period of life. He looked upon forty years of his existence as little better than wasted, and therefore he lived not only to redeem the present but the past, and to press as much work as he possibly could into the shortest space. We are at a loss whether to admire most his self-denial or that of his heroic wife. Home was dear to both, and yet both agreed to sacrifice, for the sake of advancing the temperance cause, that which alone makes home worthy of the name. The one gave up the other for the public weal, for with his numerous engagements it was impossible that he could be much at home.

He was a special favourite in the North. Here he was highly appreciated, and here he seems to have gained his noblest triumphs. Here we find him in 1841, when the Northern Union was formed under the presidency of Sir Francis M'Kenzie. It was during this journey that he met with another sad accident. He had been addressing a meeting at Aberchirder, and was to proceed next day to Banff in

company with Mr. Troup. Referring to this in his notes he says:—

“Mr. Troup got a gig, in which we set out, with a lad sitting on my knees to bring it back from Banff. We had scarcely gone two hundred yards from the village when the horse, which I afterwards learned had never been broken into harness, became unmanageable, and ran the gig across the road over a steep bank. My companions leapt out and were unhurt, before it went over, and I had just got up to do the same, when over it went with me standing in it. The horse fell on me, and almost crushed me to death. Never shall I feel the life-extinguishing grasp of death more painfully, die when or how I may, than I did at that moment. Mr. Troup remained all night with me to see whether it would be death or life, thus making a double disappointment to the friends at Banff by the want of two speakers. All the people for ten miles round vied with each other in showing kindness, so that under great pain and weakness I had many comforts. In four weeks, leaning upon a crutch, and under the blessing of a kind Providence, I was at the work again.”

We next find him in Orkney, where he laboured for some time in sixteen parishes, and in six islands, and concluded his tour with a great meeting in Kirkwall. He returned to Aberdeen, where, for a considerable time, he acted the part of a town missionary, visiting the worst parts of the town, and holding public and private meetings. He succeeded in gathering together a number of the most destitute dissipated men and women to his meetings on Sabbath evenings, which

he held in a garret fitted up with forms, and this, he tells us, formed the nucleus of what was called the Ragged Kirk in Aberdeen. Through the praiseworthy efforts of the Rev. Mr. Wilson this motley gathering was provided with a chapel to meet in, and formed into a Christian congregation. "It is worthy of notice," says our old friend in his notes, "that none of the members of this church, so far as I know, were in communion with any church before." It is of importance to observe the connection between Mr. Stirling's home-missionary efforts in Aberdeen and the ingathering of the outcast into the long-deserted sanctuary, and the restoration of not a few to at least the outward decencies of Christian life. Few men were better fitted for such a work. His mission to the houses of the poor was not merely to speak to them on the subject of temperance, but to bring before them the great truths of the Christian faith, and to speak to them of that Saviour who preached his blessed gospel to the poor, and whose words "the common people heard gladly."

In looking over Mr. Stirling's manuscript notes there is one simple expression that occurs very frequently, and which has struck us as very characteristic of the man. When speaking of travelling from place to place he says, "*I worked my way.*" As for example he says:—

"This task ended, I went north as far as Elgin, *working my way* back to Aberdeen by New Year's Day, flying in all directions during January to soirees and other meetings. In February, 1843, left for the South, *working my way* in all

the towns from that to Glasgow. Here I spent some time in missionary labour, when I was again urgently requested to return to Aberdeen. I went for seven months, taking a route from Inverness through the counties of Ross, Cromarty, Sutherland, and Caithness, and lecturing in every town and village in these counties. Returned to Inverness, then went to Fort-Augustus, Fort-William, and back again, *working my way* to Aberdeen, and just taking 'pot luck,' sometimes better and sometimes worse. From this time I had a roving commission over the whole of Scotland, from John o' Groat's to Maidenkirk. In 1845 I went to Dumfries to act for some months as a missionary, during which time I visited all Dumfries and Maxwelltown twice over, lecturing in and around these places. I next set to work in the same way in Airdrie. I *worked my way* from the south to Airdrie through all the towns lying between these places. Set to work in Airdrie and neighbourhood in the same manner as I had been employed in Dumfries, and visited not fewer than 4000 families from door to door, and found in every one of them more or less the ravages of our national curse."

We do like this homely expression "working my way," inasmuch as it presents us with a full-length portrait of the man, so far as energy, indomitable perseverance, self-denial, and quiet, unobtrusive, earnest labour are concerned. He was cast pretty much upon his own resources, he had many difficulties to encounter, and few men could have "worked their way" better than he did. The expression speaks volumes, especially to all who knew the man and the nature

of the work in which he was engaged. Nobly did he "work his way," and that work will have its due reward when the day will declare it.

Hitherto the temperance feeling and action of the country had not been thoroughly embodied and organized. In order, therefore, to gather up and concentrate that feeling and action, so as to give them unity and power, it was resolved by the leading spirits of the movement to form a union, that would embrace the whole country. This led to the formation of the Scottish Temperance League, which has risen in a few years, from a very small beginning, to be one of the leading benevolent institutions of the age. We are strongly tempted to enlarge upon its rapid growth, and its varied and highly useful operations, but we must refer our readers, who are desirous of information upon these and other points, to the League's Annual Register.

Our old friend, who had now laboured, or to use his own frequently recurring expression, "worked his way" for nearly fifteen years as a temperance lecturer, was the first agent employed by the League. He had just entered upon his engagement when he met with a sore bereavement in the death of his truly excellent wife. Referring to this afflictive event, he says:—

"It was so ordered by a kind Providence that I was at home for a short time previous to her death, doing all that I could to smooth her passage to the tomb. It was a sore bereavement to me, but a happy change to her. After many years of weak health she departed, rejoicing in the hope of a

glorious immortality through the Saviour's blood. By her death I lost the most precious blessing I had upon earth. After sharing all my joys and sorrows, and bearing to me eight sons and two daughters, she died in the seventieth year of her age, leaving seven of her children behind to bewail the loss along with me. I had often grieved her kind heart during my drinking days, the thought of which now sends many pangs of sorrow to my own heart, which words are too weak to express; a sorrow compared with which even the loss of her, and all other sorrows that have befallen me, are but light."

Troubles seldom come singly. The death of his truly excellent wife was followed by what he calls "a sore mishap." His first appointment in connection with the League was to Cumnock.

"When here," he says, "a sore mishap befel me. I had just secured a seat in the coach to Sanquhar, and was leaving the inn. When passing the coach shed, where a great dog was kept on chain, he broke away from it and laid hold of my right arm so firmly, that the ostler and two others with difficulty got it out of his mouth. I went to Dr. Wills to get it dressed, with the intention of going forward to Sanquhar when the coach came up. I stripped and showed him the wounds. He shuddered at the sight, and said it would be as much as my life was worth to go further till my arm was better. The tusks had torn the tendons, and they were hanging down several inches, and the bone was laid bare to a large extent. In a few days erysipelas began, and

I was brought to the gates of death. I was laid up in Cumnock under medical treatment for about two months, during which time there was but little hope of recovery. However, by the kindness of Providence and the good people about me, and with the skill and attention of Dr. Wills, I was in a condition to return to my own home, where I remained until the skin was grown together on my arm. All this time the friends of the cause, and the directors of the League, supplied all my wants, although it was five months before I was able to take the field again.

“When I was nearly recovered I undertook another journey to the North, and during this visit all the places from Aberdeen to Golspie were visited, the number of them being about 135. I spent the greater part of 1847 in visiting all the country south of the Forth. In September I was sent to Ireland, where I addressed twenty meetings in Antrim, Down, and Derry. Returned, and spent the winter in lecturing from place to place in the North, as far as Golspie. After working my way home in 1848 my next journey was over the west and south of Scotland, sometimes crossing the border into the counties of Cumberland, Northumberland, and Durham.”

At the commencement of the year 1849 we find him again at Aberdeen. It was on this visit to the North that he met with the severest trial that ever befel him. His eldest son for many years had led a most dissipated life, and was the occasion of much grief to him and to all the members of the family. In early life he became impatient of

parental control, and doubtless at that time the drinking habits of his father must have had a bad influence upon his mind. He made a foolish and improvident marriage, enlisted into the army shortly afterwards, became initiated in all the vices of the depraved soldiers in the regiment, deserted, came back to his native village, assumed his former employment, and latterly took to a roving life, strolling from place to place, and supporting himself by playing the clarionet, at which he was not only an adept but a thorough master. He was for many years a heart-break to his parents, especially to his poor mother. He was a young man naturally of a generous disposition—frank, free, and social, possessing excellent abilities—but drinking obtained so complete a mastery over him that he seemed to have sold himself to everything that was bad, and no depth of shame or wretchedness seemed too low for him. Often on a wintry night, when the storm was raging without, would his mother say with a bleeding heart and with wet cheeks, —“I wonder where that puir creatur’ Jamie can be on sic a nicht!” His old father had gone to Aberdeen to address a meeting on New Year’s Day (1849). To his great joy he met with his vagrant prodigal son, whom he had not seen for a long time. What greatly added to his joy was to find him sober and thoughtful, and disposed to reflect seriously upon the past, the present, and the future. They conversed for a long time together, and the conversation was such as to inspire the old man with the fondly cherished hope that Jamie had seen and done the worst, and that he

would now do better. Alas! this short but pleasant interview was but a gleam of sunshine before a dark and a troubled day. They parted to meet again in the evening, and the father went at the time to the place appointed, but no son came. Bitter was his disappointment as he returned with a foreboding heart to his lodgings, little knowing that the spirit of his son had gone to the eternal world. What a shock to the old man's feelings when next morning at breakfast he received the painful intelligence that his son had committed suicide, and had rushed from the presence of an earthly parent, whose words and looks he could not bear to hear and see again, into the presence of his God! The old man's cup of sorrow was full, and for a time his feelings were but one long-drawn sigh—"Oh, my son!—would God I had died for thee, my son—my son." The career of this young man forms another dark chapter in the annals of intemperance.

"I parted with him," says the father, "to see him again that night, but never saw him more. When going out from breakfast next morning I got the woful tidings that his corpse was in the dead-house, which gave me such a shock as almost sank me in the dust. Such was its effects on my mind, that had it not been for the counsel and kindness of a number of loving and worthy friends, I could never have taken the field again. As arrangements, however, had been already made for a long tour in the North, when the funeral of my poor son was over, with an awfully sorrow-stricken heart I started, amidst tempest and storm, to attend a soiree.

But oh! how sad was the heart amid all the music and mirth we had there."

A friend who was present at this meeting thus writes:—

"He seemed anxious at first to avoid making any allusion to the subject which lay so near his heart. His mind wandered, however, under the pressure of deep grief, so that for a time he looked bewildered, and seemed to be quite at a loss to know what to say. At last his pent-up feelings forced him to give utterance to what was uppermost in his mind. Then it was that he gave vent to such a flood of feeling as perfectly overwhelmed the meeting. Taking blame to himself for aiding in forming in his son the habits which had brought him to an untimely end, he made such an affecting appeal to parents, and gave such earnest advice to the young, that an effect was produced upon the audience such as I have never seen produced before nor since by public speaking. He closed his address by telling us that life had lost all charms for him, and that, were it his Master's will, he would gladly cast off the harness and rest from his labours, but as long as strength would be granted him he would live and labour for the temperance cause."

This sad event deepened the tone of his piety, and made him act like one who felt that he himself was going home, and that he must soon give in his account. The broad humour that had characterized his lectures was now greatly subdued, if not altogether restrained, and his addresses on all occasions now became more imbued with a deeply religious spirit. Those who were privileged to hear him con-

duct family worship, or open a meeting with devotional exercises, will still have a vivid recollection of his prayers. He had before this, as many can testify who received him into their homes, a peculiar gift in prayer; but that sad event seemed as it were to have opened another fountain in the heart of the aged father, and words of quickening power welled up with new freshness and life from its hidden depths.

It was a deeply interesting, and in many respects an affecting sight, to see old Father Stirling moving from place to place in the cause of temperance, with his well-known carpet-bag, and that inseparable companion his staff, or his "aul' crummie," as he was accustomed to call it, over which he was bending with the weight of nearly fourscore years. It was now "evening time" with him, and the severe accidents which he had met with had greatly impaired his walking, and the many trials he had encountered, especially the unhappy death of his son, had deeply furrowed his brow. Amid the pressure of all these, however, he took the field again, and we find him once more, to use his own characteristic expression, "working his way" all over the north of Scotland, and then west to Fort-William, Mull, and Oban, where he was presented with a very valuable copy of D'Aubigne's *History of the Reformation*. The journeys which he made, and the work which he accomplished, were really astonishing for one of his age. Returning from the Western Isles he "wrought his way" up the Clyde, taking all the towns on its banks on both sides, and meeting with great encouragement in

most places. Glasgow becomes, as it had often been, his head-quarters for a time, and then he is off to Hamilton, where he labours for some weeks, visiting every dwelling, and addressing meetings every night in the week, many of which were held in the open air. About the beginning of 1850 he stated, at a soiree at Mearns, that he had addressed three hundred and thirty similar meetings, in all parts of the country, exclusive of the lectures he had given.

"After this," he says, "I had a wide range to the west, south, and east, till the League's annual meeting in July, after which I was despatched to Inverness, taking many towns in the way. On this occasion I lectured in every place of any consequence in the three counties of Nairn, Moray, and Inverness. I addressed meetings in at least one hundred places."

On some of these occasions there was but little time for sleep after the meetings were over, as he was often kept out of bed to a late or rather an early hour, in meeting with members of committees and other friends, who did not always bear in mind that the "old man eloquent" had to start on cold wintry mornings long before day-break to get the steamer or the coach to convey him to his next station. So inconsiderately protracted were some of these private meetings, and so early was he obliged at times to start to one or other of these conveyances, that he never thought of undressing. This occurred more especially in his visits to the North. In 1851 he visited every town and village of any note in the east, south, and north of Scotland, although

he often went from place to place with great difficulty and pain, on account of the lameness, which became worse and worse as he advanced in years. Notwithstanding all this, however, we find him lecturing in various places, in 1852, in the counties of Renfrew, Ayr, Wigtown, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries, and Lanark.

"After this," he says, "my lame leg swelled to an alarming degree, when I was desired to go to Rothesay and place myself in Dr. Paterson's hands. I did so, but without any benefit. He ordered me to go home and follow his prescriptions and take rest for a while. I yielded to his advice, and a little improvement was the result. The directors of the League, however, so sympathized with me that I was not desired to do anything further than my own pleasure or convenience led me."

The infirm veteran could not rest, and no sooner did he feel himself a little improved than he was at the work again with all the ardour of former years. He often expressed the wish that, if it were God's will, he might be permitted to die in the harness. Whenever, therefore, his shattered strength was but a little restored, with his staff in the one hand and his little carpet-bag in the other, he was out and at his favourite work again, though now sadly bowed down with the weight of years. His journeys now became shorter, and, in 1853, we find the following entry in his notes:—

"I may now say my travelling days are ended. It is more difficult for me to walk one mile now than it would have been a few years since to walk eight or ten. For the

last fourteen years I have been lame, and have been gradually growing more and more so. I have, in the course of sixteen years, visited nearly 500 different places in Scotland, England, and Ireland. Many of these places I have visited from six to sixteen times over, and have addressed nearly five thousand meetings in churches, halls, schools, and barns, and in the open air, and sometimes in large tents erected for the purpose, and once in a 'village smiddy,' upon the Borders. At Clunie I addressed a large assembly at a soiree in a tent, in the dead of winter, when the ground was thickly covered with snow. We spent a very happy night, and men and women of all ranks were present: ministers, magistrates, merchants, mechanics, and farmers. When in a seaport town on one occasion, I went, by request, on board a ship in the harbour and lectured to a very large assembly on the quay. In 1839 I addressed the 79th Regiment in the chapel in Edinburgh Castle, then under the command of Major Young, who, at the close, came forward and told his men that he had been for a long time in the habit of taking a glass or two of wine at the mess-table with his brother officers, but that he was now an abstainer, and that he found abstinence to be better for his constitution and his conscience. In 1842 I was again invited by Major Lawrie to address the depot of the same regiment in Aberdeen barracks."

"All this labour," he adds, "was not performed to thankless masters." He then refers to various marks of respect which had been given him at different times. From the Aberdonians he received five substantial tokens of their

esteem—a very unusual thing for the “granite city.” Honourable mention is also made of Dunfermline, and Berwick, and Forres, and especially of the kind friends in Cumnock. It must now be a pleasing thought to all such, that they did help, by kind words and deeds, to cheer the heart and brighten the path of the veteran reformer.

He had a great aversion to writing. Not a word of his best speeches or lectures was ever committed to paper. He was too late of beginning, and he found it to be a very irksome task. His journal was the merest skeleton, and therefore we are presented with but few incidents, notwithstanding his long-continued and widely-extended labours. He says, “Were but the one-half of these mentioned they would swell these jottings into a book.” The incidents to which he refers are generally of a humorous character, as for example:

“Sometimes publicans came to our meetings for the purpose of creating a disturbance; at other times they sent their dupes, who had been primed by John Barleycorn for the combat; but in every case principal and agent came off only second best. One case of this kind occurred in Dingwall a few years ago. Our meeting was in the Town Hall, into which an innkeeper sent first a flesher, and next a smith, to give us battle. It was, however, a short struggle. One after one gave in, and though they were both ‘half-seas over’ they went away, thanking me, and seemingly ashamed of themselves. When ‘Boniface’ saw his two champions leave the field he showed fight himself, and gave utterance

to the greatest balderdash I ever listened to. He made himself a laughing-stock to all present, and when he could stand it no longer he addressed me, saying, 'Ye should be well whipped, sir,' and flung himself out, locking the hall-door, and taking away the key. We were all made prisoners, as he thought. He then collected a crowd outside to make every conceivable kind of noise. This petty triumph, however, did not last long, for it so happened that a person in the hall had a key which opened the door from the inside, so that we were all liberated. When we unexpectedly sallied out it was most amusing to see how the rabble took to their heels and ran, helter-skelter, in spite of all the efforts of the publican to keep them together."

On another occasion, when he was addressing a meeting in the neighbourhood of Glasgow, an old man rudely interrupted him, and was at last requested by the lecturer to state his objections. It was now evident that the objector was somewhat the worse of liquor, but he managed to say that Mr. Stirling was a far better member of society when he was making shoes for the shoeless than he was now, going about the country interfering with things he ought to let alone. Some one sitting near Mr. Stirling whispered to him that the old man who was interrupting the meeting was the grave-digger, and that as he was well known to be a tippler it would be better to take no notice of him. The objections of the grave-digger, however, were not to be buried in this way. He would have an answer, and as he seemed to be the mouthpiece of several publicans who were

present they sat enjoying what they conceived to be the triumph of the sexton, and of their cause. Mr. Stirling at last rose, and referred in the most glowing language to the blessings connected with temperance, and gave his own experience. As to the making of shoes, it was an old and useful calling, and he was certain that any one in his proper senses would rather have his shoes made or mended by a sober cobbler than a drunken one. Pointing to the sexton, who had occasioned these remarks, he requested his attention to what the poet had said about him and his calling. He then quoted verbatim, and with much effect, the following lines from Blair's *Grave*, a poem with which he was familiar when a herdboy:—

“See yonder maker of the dead man's bed,
The sexton, hoary-headed chronicle,
Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole
A gentle tear; with mattock in his hand,
Digs through whole rows of kindred and acquaintance
By far his juniors,—scarce a skull's cast up,
But well he knew its owner, and can tell
Some passage of his life.—Thus hand in hand
The sot has walked with death twice twenty years;
And yet ne'er younker on the green laughs louder,
Or clubs a smuttier tale:—When drunkards meet
None sings a merrier catch, or lends a hand
More willing to the cup.—Poor wretch! he minds not
That soon some trusty brother of the trade
Shall do for him what he has done for thousands.”

The meeting was taken by storm, and in the din of approbation the grave-digger made his exit. No words

could have been a truer portrait of the man whom the publicans delighted to honour, and whose triumph was so short-lived.

At another meeting an objector rose, and strongly pled for the moderate use of ardent spirits, and that, for his part, he was quite content to follow the Saviour, who had turned water into wine at the marriage feast! "Ay!" said the old lecturer, with a great deal of dry sarcasm, "Ay! ye would follow Him for the wine, but I'm afraid for nothing else. If ye had the wine He made ye would not find it so much to your taste." The veteran was right, for the objector was what his neighbours termed a "seasoned cask." The wines of Palestine were not brandied as ours are, and his vitiated taste would have had but little relish for "the fruit of the vine."

At the close of a meeting he was obliged from want of private accommodation to take up his quarters for the night at the village inn. On entering the public room he found a number of "drouthy cronies" drinking hard, and eager for a "spree." They pressed him to join them, urging the coldness of the night, and the need at all times for "*good fellowship*." One offered him a glass of steaming toddy, which was politely refused with the remark, "Ah, no! that's an old enemy of mine; I can give it no quarter." "You must surely have but little knowledge of your Bible, old man," said a wag, "since you don't appear to know that it commands us to *love our enemies*." "True, true," was the ready reply; "but I've never seen it commanded in any part

of the Bible that we're to *swallow* our enemies." The laugh was turned against the wag, and there was no more pressing to drink.

There are occasionally, we regret to say, to be found here and there mean-spirited and selfish committees connected with the temperance movement; but we rejoice to say, this is happily more a thing of the past than of the present. Mr. Stirling happened to be lecturing in a town where the movement was neither much respected nor well organized. At the close of the meeting he saw some of the friends in close consultation as to what was to be done with the lecturer about his bed and board during his visit. They were a "committee of ways and means" without having much at their disposal. He overheard one public-spirited gentleman asking another how many "coppers" he would be towards defraying the expense. The question and answer were such as to excite his indignation, even although he was now above fourscore years. Lifting his hat, he went out unnoticed to the friends, who were deep on the subject of "bawbees," and left them to settle how many "pennies" each was to contribute towards his support. When they got this important matter settled, to their surprise old Father Stirling was gone, and they knew not where, so they got quit of a difficulty without giving themselves any further concern. He went and found lodgings for himself, paid his bill, and next morning left by coach for Tain, where he slept in a garret for the night with an open window. Next day he was obliged to proceed to Dornoch,

where he got a conveyance from Tain to the "Muckle Ferry." When he crossed he could find no means of proceeding to the place of his destination. He was now very lame, and far beyond the time when the strength of old men is but "labour and sorrow." At last he saw a cart approaching with a large barrel of whisky on it. He resolved to take his place beside the monster keg, under the impression that at the public-house for which it was destined there must be some conveyance or another. After a rough ride of several miles, and in very strange company, he arrived at the public-house, but no conveyance was to be had. Four miles lay between him and Dornoch, and the frail old man had no help for it but to bind his carpet-bag upon his back, take his staff in his hand, and "*warsle*" along the road at the rate of little more than a mile an hour, and, to use the words of a friend, "literally trailing his lame leg behind him." By the time he reached Dornoch, says the same friend, he seemed completely exhausted, but after a cup of tea and a few hours' rest his ever elastic spirit began to revive, and by the hour of meeting he was ready to deliver his lecture with an amount of feeling and a flow of natural energy which quite astonished his audience.

On leaving Dornoch a friend who conveyed him a part of the way said to him, "I fear you will never be able to come again, Mr. Stirling?" "No," he said, "Geordie, you will never see me here again, but God will send men far better fitted for the work."

This was his last visit to the North, and anyone who

will but picture the old man dragging himself, footsore and weary, at the rate of a mile an hour, and with the burden of fourscore years weighing him to the ground, cannot but be convinced that "he worked his way" with heroic self-denial and devotion to the last. On one occasion, when his friends in the North saw that a few days' rest were absolutely necessary to recruit his wearied frame, they earnestly entreated him to rest at Dornoch, but his answer was, "Na, na! it's no lang I've to be in this world, and though I should work all the time I will never be able to work as I ought, nor undo the evil I have done." The thought of his drinking days, the evil example he then set to others, and especially to the members of his own family, lay heavily upon his heart. His own words are:—

"My heart sinks within me when I think on the part I took at one time in upholding the drinking customs, and of the number who, through my example, became victims to these, for I cannot doubt that some did. The thought, besides humbling me in the dust, has impelled me with an ever-increasing desire to devote all my powers of mind and body to heal the wound I have inflicted upon society in bygone times."

CHAPTER VII.

THE EVENING OF LIFE.

UR old friend was now in the "sere and yellow leaf," and notwithstanding all the trials he had passed through, the severe accidents he had met with, the many labours he had performed, and the pressure of increasing infirmities, his was a hearty, hale old age. It was now "evening time" with him, and he went but seldom to any great distance to address a meeting. He could not, however, be idle, and he spent a portion of almost every day during the close of his life in visiting the workshop of a friend in "Millguy," a shoemaker, who employed several workmen. These visits were turned to profitable account, for the veteran always took a book with him, and when the men were busy making or mending shoes he read aloud to them from some favourite author. The subjects read were very varied, but all of them were of an interesting and instructive character, such as travels, history, biography, and frequently some choice selections from our best poets. Dr. Godwin's lectures on "Atheism," recently delivered to the working-classes at Bradford, were read through in this way by the aged reformer, day after day, and duly commented upon to the shoemakers as they busily plied their wax-ends and their



WORKSHOP READINGS.

awls. He highly appreciated these able lectures; and had the venerable author been present *incognito* at any of these workshop readings, and seen the interest with which they were read and listened to by the workmen in that little cottage at "Millguy," he would have felt himself more than rewarded for all his labour in preparing and delivering these lectures at his advanced period of life.

Old Stirling's daily readings in that workshop might well form a fit subject for the genius of some of our best artists. He had an attentive auditory in the journeymen shoemakers, who eagerly devoured all that he read. His visits were so regular and so highly prized that the men could calculate to a minute almost when he would come, and it was indeed a sore disappointment when anything came in the way to interrupt the course of his usual readings. Sometimes these would suggest topics for discussion; and it will be long before that little coterie of workmen will forget the varied information their old friend could bring to bear upon some disputed point, or the glowing warmth with which he defended this benevolent movement and the other. He had a most retentive memory. In this respect he was singularly gifted, and occasionally he would treat the shoemakers to a very graphic account of his travels in various parts of the country, and of his adventures in connection with the temperance reformation. It was a rich treat to hear the old man at such times, and to see his face lighted up with that peculiar glow of satisfaction which only truly happy memories, and the consciousness of having lived to some purpose, could impart.

At the fireside of the manse, too, where he was always sure to find a hearty welcome from his old friend and minister, he had great delight at the close of any of his long journeys in recounting all that he had seen, and in "fighting all his temperance battles o'er again."

His daughter, with whom he resided some time previous to his death, had some little children, with whom he spent many happy hours, and in whom he felt a deep interest. Their grandfather's stories will long dwell in the memories of those who were old enough to remember them. He had great delight in family worship, which he observed regularly when he was at home, and an aged infirm neighbour residing in the same tenement was always asked to be present on these occasions. At home or abroad, it was his great aim to make himself useful in some way or another to young and old. His loving, cheerful disposition, his genial good humour, his exhaustless fund of stories, his apt and graphic illustrations, his happy old age, endeared him to all.

The last time we had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Stirling was in June, 1855, at the opening of a temperance establishment in Glasgow, belonging to a friend whom he highly esteemed. Next morning, when we met him in the street in company with that friend, he looked feeble and worn-out, but the old spirit was there, and even then he cherished the idea that he would yet be able to accomplish a tour to the North, and see and address his friends once more at Aberdeen. He returned home and resumed his visits and his readings to his friends at the workshop as usual. He took

a deep interest in the young, and his last public appearance at any meeting was at a soiree held in "Millguy" on the 1st January, 1856; when he delivered a most earnest address to the youths who were present. At the commencement of this year his visits to the workshop were as regular as ever, and rendered still more interesting by the perusal of a new publication, which some friend had kindly sent him. But one day he came not, and the next he was absent. His visits and his readings, which had been such a source of pleasure to himself and to the inmates of that workshop, were now for ever at an end. He was seized with a complaint which ended in paralysis, and his naturally robust frame was soon reduced to a state of great weakness. From the nature of his disease he was subject at times to great mental depression, when "he was made to possess the sins of his youth," and the memory of his drinking days came up like a dark cloud between him and the sunshine of Christian peace and hope. He was cast into "depths," and from these he could not even at times cry for help. On such occasions his aged and faithful minister, who frequently visited him, acted the part of a wise counsellor and a faithful friend. It is at such times that genuine piety in humble life undertakes many kindly offices, and does much, amid the short snatches from labour, to cheer the afflicted and speak a word in season to the weary. The workshop readings were not forgotten by those who had so highly appreciated them. These visits were now kindly returned, and almost every night during Mr. Stirling's illness did the

shoemaker, a worthy pious elder, repair from his workshop to the bedside of his dying friend, to read to him appropriate passages from the Word of God, and offer up fervent prayers in his behalf. A worthy elder in humble life, well versed in his Bible, and thoroughly in earnest, is an invaluable blessing to the sons and daughters of affliction in the dwellings of the poor.

The directors of the Scottish Temperance League, to their honour be it recorded, felt a deep interest in him all along, especially during the closing days of his life, and generously provided for all his wants. Two of his faithful friends from Glasgow, Robert Rae and William Logan, paid him a visit a few days before his death, and to them we are indebted for the following particulars:—

“We found him confined to bed. He had had a slight paralytic stroke on the previous day, which affected his left side and also his speech. He was, however, able at once to recognize us, and said, ‘I am very glad to see you both.’ Immediately after we entered the house the Rev. A. McNaughton, his venerable pastor, called to see him. Mr. M.’s remarks were brief and to the point, and his prayer most appropriate and impressive.

“After the minister left we said, ‘James, you will now find Christ to be your best friend.’ In reply he said in a firm tone of voice, and with great impressiveness and fervour, ‘Christ is a friend to whom we can all go at all times. He is ever ready to receive *all* who come to him in *faith*,’ laying special emphasis on the words *all* and *faith*. That comfort-

ing passage in Isaiah xli. 10 was repeated, and was evidently relished by our dying friend—‘Fear not thou, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.’ During our visit another minister of the district called, and among other things he asked our friend if he was now ready to give up his spirit to God, who gave it. The reply, uttered in a distinct voice, was—‘Yes, I really am ready—quite ready.’ One of us said, ‘We are glad to find you trusting in Christ as your hope for heaven. We expected this; you often expressed it when in health. And now that you seem to be dying we have no doubt you still feel some interest in that movement to which you have devoted so much of your time.’ He replied, with great emphasis, ‘Yes, sirs, I feel a keener and a keener interest in the great cause of temperance than ever.’

“‘The movement,’ one of us replied, ‘is now in a more hopeful condition than when you entered the field some twenty-five years ago; and your labours have done something to bring this about.’

“Our old friend’s voice for a few moments seemed to resume all its former well-known expressive tone, and he said, with an earnestness that would have impressed the largest audience he ever addressed—‘If ever I were able to lift up my voice in public again, I—I—I—.’ He could say no more at the time; but there was no difficulty whatever in comprehending what he meant. We were all deeply

moved. One of us broke silence by remarking, 'James, you have done your part faithfully.' After a brief pause, during which he seemed in deep meditation, he said, 'Mr. Wallace urged me during last summer to write more on the subject; but I always found great difficulty in writing.' These were the last words which fell from his lips on the great temperance enterprise in our hearing. He evidently in these words referred to a short sketch he had written of his own life, and which Mr. Wallace had been urging him to extend."

He had all along, as we have seen, been an ardent admirer of nature; and a few days before his death, when the breath of spring was again renewing the face of the earth, he asked his daughter, one morning at six o'clock, to open the window shutters, so that he might see the light, and then he desired her to lift the window a little, that he might hear the early song of birds. The ruling passion was strong in death. At that instant he heard the mellow piping of a thrush from a neighbouring tree, and he said, with much rapture, "Oh, that's the voice of nature! Sweet nature has spring coming to renew her charms, but no coming spring will on earth revive the cold, cold ashes of the urn!" He was in a desponding mood that morning. The nature of his complaint tended to produce that, but happier thoughts ere long came to his relief, and he was enabled to cling to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, and who has said, "Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth her dead." The voices of nature could not comfort the departing soul, but the voice

of the Elder Brother did—"He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," and in the full faith of this our aged friend fell asleep on the 20th March, 1856. He was loosed from his infirmity. His severe conflict and weary wanderings were brought to a close. The harness was ungirt, and he went to rest.

On the memorable evening when he joined the temperance society along with a few others, some put down their names with the understanding that they might withdraw them in six, twelve, or eighteen months. The Rev. A. M'Naughton, who stood by, turned to Mr. Stirling and said, "Well, James, for how long have you signed?" "For evermore, sir, with God's help," was the reply, and with that help he nobly "*worked his way*" through many difficulties, before which any ordinary man would have quailed; and he never ceased to do battle with the great curse of our country till he heard the voice saying, "Come up hither!" and the old warrior exchanged his battle-sword for the palm, and entered upon that land where there is "no curse, and nothing to hurt or destroy."

His remains were conveyed by many faithful friends to their final resting-place in the quiet churchyard of New Kilpatrick. The day of interment was one of the brightest and most genial in the opening spring, and the fresh flowers and the bursting buds, and the many voices of nature, as well as revelation, gave strength to the assurance, which friends were warranted to cherish, that "earth was committed to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," in the well-founded hope of a blessed and a glorious immortality.

At the request of the directors of the Scottish Temperance League the Rev. William Reid, of Edinburgh, preached to a crowded audience in the City Hall, Glasgow, an appropriate and heart-stirring sermon, in which he paid a high and well-merited tribute to the worth and labours of the departed veteran. What a change! Thousands assembled, and hundreds could not obtain admission, to hear a funeral oration for a man who, thirty years before, might have been found lying dead drunk, ill-clad, and in danger of being frozen to death in the dead of winter, not very many yards from the magnificent hall where a funeral oration was delivered in honour of his untiring and invaluable labours as an advocate of that cause which was instrumental through the blessing of God in plucking him as a "brand from the burning," and which made him the means of blessing many homes, and of making many hearts sing for joy.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOSING REMARKS.

T is no difficult matter to form a correct estimate of Mr. Stirling's character, or of the value of his labours. He was so transparent, and so thoroughly in earnest, that he was seen at once to the depths of his nature; whilst his racy mother wit, his broad humour, his keen observation, his shrewd common sense, his teeming fancy, his rich fund of anecdote and story, and his love of nature, made him, notwithstanding all the defects of his education, perhaps the most popular orator that ever Scotland sent forth from amongst her artisan population; and he is just another proof of how much a strong will and honesty of purpose, even in connection with hard and horny hands and leathern apron, will accomplish, despite of all the unfavourable circumstances with which a man may be environed. He left his shoemaking block and laid aside his leather apron, not from any love of notoriety, for he was naturally a reserved man, but at the call of duty, and he came forth to give a voice to the brood of miseries which intemperance was inflicting upon the homes of the poor. He knew all these from the sad experience of fifty years, and this knowledge, with the natural aptitudes he possessed, enabled him to present a picture of

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self-inflicted evils to the life. Who that ever heard the "old man eloquent" at a crowded meeting in that early and well-known arena of temperance discussion, Spreull's Court Chapel, can ever forget the thrilling effect which he produced upon the roughest natures by his original and graphic descriptions of a drunkard's life, accompanied with the most unsparing exposures of the heartless selfishness of the publican. His lecture upon the "Four Crafts—King-craft, Priest-craft, Witch-craft, Stell-craft"—was quite unique of its kind, and evinced great breadth of information, and a mind of no ordinary power. The first three "crafts" were merely introductory to the last, upon which he never failed to bring all the strength of his rough-and-ready eloquence to bear.

It is matter of regret that any jottings that he did keep in the form of a journal are of the most meagre description, and convey but a very poor idea of the extent and value of his labours. These jottings are oftentimes but a bare enumeration of places he visited. There is scarcely a town or village in Scotland with which he was not more or less familiar. The first time we had the pleasure of hearing him was at a meeting of no ordinary interest in a small mining village in Stirlingshire, long noted for its squalid appearance and the drunken habits of the people. Every pay day presented a terrible scene of drunken riot, which exhausted itself in two or three days, during which there were frequently not a few bloody fights and domestic brawls. Few villages could be more the stronghold of our drinking

customs than this one. It lay in the very shadow of a distillery, and supported no fewer than five public-houses. At a rough guess, we would say that the population at the time of which we speak could not be more than a hundred families, every one of which almost was cursed with drinking. Distant at least a mile and a half from any church, inhabited for the most part by miners, with five public-houses to support, and with a distillery in the back-ground this village seemed in a most hopeless condition. The temperance movement was introduced, even into this stronghold of the enemy, and "Old Stirling" was amongst the first who appeared on the temperance platform in that place. The village school-room was crowded. Prayer was offered, and now the old man proceeded with such earnestness, originality, eloquence, and graphic power to depict, sometimes in his own native Doric, and again in the most powerful words which the purest English could afford, the evils under which this village groaned. He spoke home, however, to the hearts of the miners, many of whom had come to hear him with great prejudice. He was aware of this; but a few well-told anecdotes at the outset, rough indeed they might seem to fastidious ears, and a few homely allusions to the occupation of his audience, with now and then a well-thrown-in technical phrase, as if he had wrought in the pit from his boyhood, took every heart by storm, and secured in behalf of his statements an amount of practical sympathy which threatened for a time at least to shut every public-house in the village. We have still a vivid recollection

of the rare power which the old man wielded over that assembly, composed for the most part of very rough and rude materials. At one moment we saw the big tear coursing down the face of many of these miners, and at another the whole assembly was convulsed with laughter. The change which took place for the better was truly astonishing; and had the reformation not been checked by a variety of untoward circumstances, that once wretched clachan would have become a model village. Amid all counteracting influences the good has not wholly disappeared; for the church which now stands at the east end of that village would in all probability never have been built but for the successful introduction of the temperance movement.

The good that was done in this locality may be taken as an instance of the benefit he conferred upon many other places. His addresses were all of an eminently practical and impulsive character. They led to action, whilst they were memorable from their quaint originality and graphic power. Many of the most devoted temperance reformers received their first impressions, their first impulse to action from the old man. There was scarcely a place he visited but he left one or more not only favourably impressed, but roused to action. He was a man, in every sense of the term, "cut out" for the work at which he laboured so assiduously, and with so many tokens of success, for the last thirty years of his life. The secret of his success lay in his plain, downright common sense, his thorough earnestness, his terribly truthful exposure of the evils of drinking, drawn from his own sad

experience of nearly fifty years. The man whose craving for strong drink at one time was such, that hatless, and coatless, and shoeless, he could take even a favourite cock from his roost and bear him off to the public-house, and sell poor "chanticleer" for whisky—the man who had met with publicans who could be parties to such a transaction, and who would clutch his last sixpence when they knew that his family were starving—the man who, when he woke up from such a state of degradation, felt himself "boiling over" with remorse, and shame, and indignation at himself and at the evil of which he had been so long the poor dupe—the man who was gifted with strong common sense, and who had a generous dash of poetry in his nature, and withal a constant flow of humour, which welled up from a warm heart—the man who could express himself not merely with the ease of a glib-tongued speaker, but whose thoughts and words fell like hammers, or pierced like arrows, or danced and skimmed like so many playful morning sunbeams—such a man could not but wield a mighty influence over any assembly composed of the class from which he had sprung. Such a man was James Stirling. He had good natural abilities, and conspicuous amongst these were his strong common sense and his shrewd mother wit. He was happily, by the blessing of God, redeemed, as many have been, from the hand of the spoiler, and all that he had he was more than willing to lay out for the good of his fellowmen in the promotion of that cause to which he owed so much.

Some time ago the proprietors of the *Commonwealth*

newspaper offered a number of prizes for sketches of the lives of working men, to be written by themselves. The result was, that a great many sketches were produced, but a limited number only appeared in print. The gentlemen who were adjudicators were much struck at the very frequent and grateful references made in these autobiographies to the labours of James Stirling. Many of the writers had been all but hopelessly ruined by intemperance; and when nothing but ruin seemed to stare them in the face, they were happily brought within the range of his influence, just at the time when it was "*now or never*" with them, so far as any good resolution or any effort in the way of well-doing was concerned. But for the circumstance of their meeting with the venerable reformer, and listening to his graphic eloquence, which, when once heard, could not be easily forgotten, many of these highly creditable sketches would never have been written, for the love of strong drink would have utterly destroyed the ability which they display, and the writers of them in all probability would never have been redeemed from intemperate habits. Many of these working men, located in various parts of the country, in revealing their sad life-struggles, have referred in their sketches to James Stirling, not merely with gratitude, but with a kind of ecstasy, as they recalled and gladly made known the good he was instrumental in conferring upon themselves and their families. Such grateful references as these were an altogether spontaneous tribute to the memory of a good man, whose name is a revered "household word" in many

once wretched homes that he made happy, and to many once sad hearts to which the emotion of joy had been long a stranger. Very many throughout Scotland look back to the time when they first heard him, as the turning-point in their lives, which brightened their path, and led them on to better days.

The temperance movement commenced amongst the very class for whom he was specially adapted, and in his case, as in very many others, it was the means of developing talent and aptitudes for usefulness which would otherwise have run to waste. No movement in modern times has done more for the development of talent amongst our artisan population than the temperance reformation. But for this Stirling would never have been known beyond his native district, and there known only as a hard drinker, with more than a usual spice of wit and humour, and in all probability at last he would have died as a sot, instead of finishing an honourable career of hard labour, manfully carried on for thirty years in the cause of God and his fellowmen. We can point to very many instances of intellect, talent, and moral energy redeemed, which, but for this movement, in all likelihood would have been lost.

If the eye of any poor inebriate shall fall upon these pages, let him take courage and manfully resolve, in the strength of God, to do battle with his worst enemy. With such a life-story as these pages make known, there is hope for the drunkard. Let no one despair. After Bunyan and Newton, who may not obtain mercy? and after James Stirling, what

drunkard may not be reformed? The wasted part of his life, and that extended over a period of many years, is a sad but a too common illustration of the evils of drinking; the latter part is a standing testimony to the applicability and power of temperance principles. In such a life, and, thank God! it is far from being a solitary instance, we have one of the strongest arguments for the absolute necessity of the temperance movement; and at the same time we have a noble testimony to its efficiency in producing a marked change for the better, even upon the very worst materials. Apart from many arguments that might be advanced in behalf of this cause, we can afford to rest its defence on such practical illustrations of its power as are furnished in the life now sketched, and in the lives of many others, who have been won back to the path of sobriety, usefulness, and peace. Such proofs are neither few nor far between. They are to be found in every town and village, in every factory and workshop, and we may add, in every Christian congregation throughout the land.

This was the agency, under God, of making James Stirling what he was. It was the means of taking him from the "fearful pit." He was deeply convinced of this, and therefore he sought to wield this new power with unflinching perseverance and unflagging zeal. He believed that the cause which had been the means of saving himself when he was in an all but hopeless condition would save others, and therefore he unweariedly wrought to accomplish this till his dying day. He felt compelled to labour, not merely

from the conviction that temperance appliances were in themselves a mighty agency for good, but from the oppressive feeling which was as a thirty years' agony to his soul, that he had been the means of doing unspeakable mischief in the days of his drinking career, and that therefore every moment and every energy of his redeemed life ought to be given to the promotion of temperance, especially amongst the class from which he had sprung.

In referring to his past career he often bitterly regretted that it was but the "*gloaming*" of his life that he could devote to the service of his Maker. There are not a few still living who have a vivid recollection of the sad expression of his countenance as he shook his head when referring to the past, and said, "Alas! that I should have but the '*gloaming*' of my life to devote to my Maker, and to the helping on of a good cause." This is very characteristic of the man. It shows his thoroughly earnest spirit, whilst the term "*gloaming*" could only have occurred to a mind imbued with a fine poetical fancy, and with an eye for nature in all her varied moods.

This was to no small extent the secret of his popularity with the masses. His power of word-painting was as natural and easy to him as speaking itself, and the pictures which his graphic words brought up in rapid succession were living things, sometimes indeed not very pleasant, and to the fastidious and the prejudiced perhaps not very tasteful, but still they were the life—life as he had seen it, alas! in some of its worst forms, and nature as he had

looked at it all his days with the love of a child. His allusions to nature with which his speeches abounded were always striking, memorable, and not only life-like, but full of life itself. This gave him a power which only belongs to those who are of "nature's true nobility."

His earnestness was conspicuous in all that he did, and this itself will always give a man power among his fellows. In his drinking days he drank hard; he was an earnest drinker. There was no need for mere doubt or suspicion about this. He did it with a passion, and when he turned a new leaf he threw his whole soul into the good cause which he had espoused.

In addition to all this, the religious element entered largely into his character, even during the darkest days of his drinking career. The impressions of a godly up-bringing in youth never left him. He never could get wholly away from its influence, and this in his sober moments produced a conflict which, to use his own expression, was "like hell itself." He could never banish from his mind the hallowed remembrance of family worship at his father's fireside. With such feelings as these it is easy to conceive what must have been his agony when sinning and repenting; and in the face of all these early impressions and his own sense of duty, and notwithstanding all he had suffered, he said, regarding his worst enemy, "I will seek it yet again." He was much indebted to his affectionate, pious, patient wife, who in the darkest days hoped against hope, and who, after nearly forty years' endurance, had more than her prayers

answered, not only in the complete sobriety of her husband, but in his widely extended labours for the good of others. It was also a great blessing that he enjoyed the ministrations and the fatherly care and attention of the venerable minister of "Millguy," whose example did so much "to save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."

The Christian element became more and more a visible and a living power after he became a sober man. Mere impressions, and what may be termed merely religious sentimentalism, now became a real life. All his labours in behalf of temperance were conducted with a Christian aim, and in a Christian spirit. A clergyman at whose house he was always a welcome guest, when his route lay in that part of the country, has informed us that he was much struck with his prayers at family worship, which he was often asked to conduct, and which he always did in such a characteristic and impressive manner as to convince all who heard him that he was no ordinary man.

A friend who was with him in Dunoon on a beautiful Sabbath evening in summer has still a vivid recollection of a meeting held on that occasion near the quay, and of the impression which was then produced. The far-flashing radiance of the setting sun gilded the noble frith, and bathed with its golden light the majestic peaks of Arran, the Cumbræes, and all the giant hills of Argyle, and the softly undulating plains of Ayrshire. It was one of those sunsets when earth seems to put on for a time the lustrous loveliness of the better land. He could not allow such an

occasion to pass unimproved; and as there were very many out of doors enjoying the fragrance and beauty of that delightful hour, he proposed to hold a meeting by the sea-shore. A large crowd soon assembled, and his venerable appearance, his broad earnest face, his massive forehead deeply furrowed with age, his silvery locks trembling in the breeze, his eye beaming with affection and intelligence, his peculiar phraseology, his thick and guttural articulation as he read with emphasis the psalm to be sung, awakened at the very outset the interest of the crowd. But this was greatly increased, when, at the close of the meeting, he rose up, bent and hoary with age, and in that vast temple poured forth a prayer, replete with the most striking and apposite allusions to nature, and the most gorgeous imagery which Scripture language furnishes upon the same subject;—and then passing from the beauty of such a scene to the ravages of sin, every heart seemed melted, as he lifted up his own in gratitude to the Father of mercy for His redeeming love, in the gift of the Saviour, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. That prayer will long be remembered by those who heard it. Then followed an address as striking and as memorable, and which, doubtless, owed much of its peculiar power to the inspiring influences of that glorious sunset, and the magnificent panorama of unrivalled scenery that lay all around. Whatever motives brought the crowd together, and however differently affected they might be at first, all retired at last most favourably impressed, and under the conviction

that they had listened to a man not only actuated by Christian earnestness, but moved by expansive philanthropy, and gifted with genius and imagination, which could press into his service the scenes and events of the passing hour, and make them all tell with effect upon the great object for which he lived and laboured. His company was greatly relished by the intelligent and the pious, in the higher as well as the humbler walks of life.

Such a man, notwithstanding all the imperfections of his education and all the drawbacks of many wasted years, and his humble position in society, could not but exert a very widely extended influence for good even in the "*gloaming*" of his life. He was highly esteemed by the leading benevolent men of his day, and their estimate of his character and labours may be gathered from the following words of John Dunlop, author of the well-known *Exposure of our Drinking Usages*:

"Our excellent friend, 'Old Stirling,' is worthy of being denominated a hero, if good sense, energetic eloquence, and untiring good-will to his kind, can bestow this title."

Substantial and public expression has been given to this sentiment in the monument which has been recently erected over the grave of the veteran reformer in New Kilpatrick churchyard. It is a lovely sequestered spot, in keeping with that strong love of nature which glowed so warmly in his breast, whilst the monument, in its plain simplicity, is no less appropriate to the memory of one who assumed so little and yet did so much.

The monument is in the form of an obelisk. Near the top there is a sculptured bridle, an ingenious device of the sculptor's to represent temperance or restraint, of which the departed was such a remarkable instance.

The following is the inscription:—

In Memory of
JAMES STIRLING:

THE FIRST AGENT OF THE
SCOTTISH TEMPERANCE LEAGUE,
AND ONE OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED ADVOCATES OF
THE TEMPERANCE REFORMATION.

BORN, . . . 6TH MARCH, 1774.
DIED, . . . 20TH MARCH, 1856.

His Noblest Monument is to be found in the many once wretched homes that he made happy; and the Highest Testimony to his Christian character and personal worth, to his stirring eloquence and self-denying labours, is expressed in the warm gratitude of hundreds whom he rescued from the crushing grasp of Scotland's greatest curse.

The blessing of those who were ready to perish came upon him, and he caused many hearts to sing for joy.

ERECTED BY A FEW FRIENDS.

This monument is not only a deserved tribute of respect to one who "*worked his way*" through many difficulties that he might do good to his fellowmen, but it stands out to the eye of the world a testimony to the efficiency of that cause which did so much for him, and for the promotion of which he laboured till the shadows of extreme old age lengthened on his path, and the toils and the "*gloaming*" of life were exchanged for the rest and the light of the better land. "Though dead he yet speaketh;" and many shall read on that monument one of the strongest arguments in behalf of that cause which shall yet, with God's blessing, redeem our country from the hand of the spoiler.

It is but proper to state, before closing this memoir, that a public meeting was held in Milngavie in celebration of the erection of this monument. The aged pastor, a man of high Christian worth and genial sympathies, who had laboured for nearly half a century in that village, and who was then verging on fourscore years, very appropriately occupied the chair. No one, on reading these pages, can fail to see that James Stirling was much indebted to the fatherly care of this good man. The meeting was one of peculiar interest and very mingled memories. The precentor's desk, once occupied by the departed, and from which he had often resolved, when the benediction was pronounced, to ask the co-operation of his brethren in an effort to put down the prevalent drinking customs, was occupied by the venerable minister himself. In an address, replete with generous feeling and

stirring recollections of bygone times, he referred with much emotion and in the following terms to his old friend:—"My mingled feelings connected with past reminiscences I shall not venture to express. From the commencement of my ministry my connection with him has been intimate. The work to which he so earnestly and successfully devoted himself in his later years was one in which I took an early and a deep interest. In a period of his history when he needed brotherly, Christian, and pastoral admonition, I had serious conversations with him, kindly and affectionately responded to by him, as they were kindly and affectionately tendered by me. I remember being much taken with the intelligence and good feeling with which he would express himself in these conversations. When the first Temperance Tracts were published, I eagerly procured and circulated some of them. Beecher's Sermons were not the earliest published here in Scotland, but on their being printed in Glasgow I got and circulated in our neighbourhood a few copies. I have reason to believe it was one of these which came into James Stirling's hands, and left on his mind such an impression as decided his future course. The popularity and success of my friend gave me much pleasure; and often as he returned from his temperance excursions he had great delight in rehearsing to me, and I in listening to, his graphic narratives, and these often interspersed with original and sagacious remarks. The Scottish Temperance League have done honour to themselves and to their cause in the honour they in this manner confer on the memory of

a humble but meritorious, devoted, and useful servant, and all the more that they soothed, sweetened, and cheered his later years while he lived, not reserving, as the world so often does, its honorary rewards till those who have merited them are no longer alive to enjoy them."

The meeting was a mournfully pleasant occasion to all, especially to the aged chairman. It recalled not merely the dark days of the past, but the happy change, and the varied and useful labours that filled up the evening of a very checkered life, which ended calmly and brightly at last, like a day which began with gloom and driving rack, but which closed ere the "gloaming" hour with the hushed stillness of peace itself, and the mellow, genial radiance of a bright sunset, which gilds the dark clouds in the back-ground, and which goes—

"Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven."

THE END.

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